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Performing Nationalism:
Mariachi, Media and the Transformation of a Tradition (1920-1942)

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Performing Nationalism:
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by

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Dedication

To Ana, Gabriela and Antonio,

Your love and support made this work possible.

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Performing Nationalism:
Mariachi, Media and the Transformation of a Tradition (1920-1942)

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This dissertation focuses on the development of mariachi as an ensemble and a repertory between 1920 and 1942 with particular attention to relationships with the Mexican and U.S. radio, recording and film industries. Mariachi, a music and dance tradition from Mexico's western region was transformed during this period from a rural *mestizo* cultural expression to an international visual and sound symbol of national identity. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the competing ideologies of *hispanismo* and *indigenismo* infused Mexican sociopolitical and cultural discourses with concepts of identity that reflected Spanish and Indigenous influences. In the postrevolutionary period, the government promoted a version of national identity based on the concept of *mestizaje* located within rural expressive culture. As regional musical traditions became central elements in the project of cultural nationalism, mariachi emerged as a marker of national identity and symbol of *mexicanidad*.

With the movement of large populations to Mexico City in the mid 1920s, mariachi was integrated into urban social and cultural life. The activities of U.S. transnational record companies surged in the late 1920s and early 30s through alliances with radio stations and the creation of networks. Radio stations XEB and XEW were the main sources for broadcasting of Mexican popular music and radio shows were designed for the purpose of advertising U.S. consumer products. The creation of radio networks and increased record distribution effectively absorbed mariachi into processes for the media production of culture and "split" the ensemble from its traditional contexts and practices of performance.

With the success of the *comedia ranchera* film genre in the late 1930s and early 40s, mariachi reached unimaginable heights of popularity. The singing *charro*, a symbol of machismo and virility, was embodied in the figures and voices of Tito Guízar and Jorge Negrete - icons of the genre. As a vehicle for the *canción ranchera,* the films of the "golden age" projected the image and sound of *mexicanidad* through processes of musical commodification associated with the contexts and conditions of the Mexican and U.S. transnational media industries.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Mariachi is recognized throughout the world as a visual and sound symbol of Mexico. In the form familiar to today's audiences, the ensemble consists of trumpet, violin, *vihuela*, guitar and *guitarrón*.[1] Musicians wear the *traje de charro* (suit of the Mexican cowboy), a style of dress associated with the rural western region, that is typically ornamented with silver or detailed embroidery. Vocal style emphasizes operatic qualities and instrumental performance demonstrates a level of virtuosity that reflects advanced musical training. In short, today's mariachi ensembles (from professionals to select university and high school groups) aspire to a performance standard that has emerged over the past seventy years and the tradition's popularity is indicative of its important cultural position as an expression of identity for audiences on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.

The visual and sound elements described above are considered by contemporary musicians and audiences to be representative of "authentic" mariachi performance. However, questions emerge regarding the impact of social, political and cultural life on mariachi development. For example, what effect did the sociopolitical climate in the 1920s and 30s have on the construction of the modern mariachi? How and why did mariachi, out of all the regional musical traditions in Mexico, achieve the status of national ensemble? What was the relationship between mariachi and the emerging electronic media industries in Mexico during the 1920s and 30s and to what extent were

[1] The *vihuela* is a small, guitar-like instrument that provides harmonic support for the ensemble. It has a rounded back and is pitched higher, relative to the guitar. The *guitarrón* is the bass instrument in the shape of a large guitar also with a rounded back.

U.S. transnational companies involved in processes of Mexican cultural production and distribution?

This dissertation follows a different path from previous works on the history of mariachi (Chamorro Escalante 2000; Flores y Escalante and Dueñas Herrera 1994; Jáuregui 1990; Ochoa Serrano 1992; Rafael 1982; Sheehy 2006; Villacis Sosa and Francillard Ch. 1995). Although the recording, radio and film industries have been acknowledged, no previous research has focused specifically on the relationship between the electronic media and mariachi development. In the 1920s and 30s political and cultural ideologies merged with nationalist discourses as culture was seized as a pathway to unification following a decade of civil war. The influence of these ideologies on musical culture set the political and cultural stages for emergence of mariachi in the late 1930s and into early 40s. In addition, interactions between the Mexican and U.S. media industries during this period became increasingly common and fueled the rise of the Mexican popular music industry in the 1930s and 40s.

This study historicizes various aspects of mariachi performance practice. Vocal production and styling have not been examined to any significant degree especially with regard to relationships with the art music tradition and performers such as Tito Guízar and Jorge Negrete. Inspired by cultural theorist Raymond Williams (1983 [1976]; 1977), the process of historicizing mariachi performance practices will, I believe, lead to a better understanding of how certain elements or characteristics of the tradition came into being and the extent to which social, political, economic and cultural forces outside the tradition affected development.

This dissertation highlights the formative years of the recording, radio and film industries in Mexico and the extent to which political, cultural and economic interests converged with the efforts of individual performers, groups, and the media moguls to

develop the image and sound of mariachi and create the conditions for its appropriation as a national symbol of identity. This work is written primarily from the perspective of the practitioners and producers of mariachi and the extent to which the media industries shared in the development of the tradition. Audience reception, undoubtedly an important aspect of cultural research, would require a modified approach than the one presented here. For this reason, I have chosen to set aside issues related to how the music was received in order to focus on mariachi as a cultural product and the influences that affection its creation, production and distribution. The relationships between the media industries, the practitioners and producers of mariachi in recordings, over the airwaves and on film resulted from a complex mingling of political, social and economic interactions that emanated from both sides of the border. By examining connections and affiliations among aspects of musical performance, capitalism and nationalist ideals, new insight is gained on the development of mariachi and its transformation from a rural tradition to national ensemble

The Mariachi Tradition and the Construction of Authenticity

The concept of tradition is an important part of the discourse on the history of mariachi. In this study, I approach tradition as a cultural construction that "has little to do with the persistence of old forms, but more with the ways in which forms and values are linked together" (Erlmann 1991, 10). The notion of authenticity is intertwined with the conceptualization of the mariachi tradition and commonly referred to as a cultural form

that is passed-on from one generation to the next.[2] This conceptualization follows a "commonsense" understanding of the meaning of "tradition" as a bounded collection of cultural traits (Handler and Linnekin 1984, 273-276). For example, Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, recognized as the oldest and most famous mariachi ensemble, outlines its history in terms of "generations" and traces its origin back to 1897. This division into "generations" was also expressed to me by Maestro Rubén Fuentes, general director and arranger for Mariachi Vargas since 1944, in a personal interview on January 18, 2006 in Mexico City.[3] Also, two recordings: *La Fiesta del Mariachi, Cuarta Generación* (Fourth Generation), 1994, Philips 522923-2 and *5ta. Generación* (Fifth Generation), 2002, RF-103 utilize this notion and contribute to conceptualization of Mariachi Vargas as an eternal musical family.[4]

Even though no direct descendents of Gaspar Vargas have been associated with the group for over twenty years (his son, Silvestre, died in 1985), longevity translates into credibility and reinforces Vargas' position as *El Mejor Mariachi del Mundo* ("The Best Mariachi in the World"). This phrase, which appears on t-shirts and jackets available at concerts, has been in use for nearly fifty years and was noted on a number of recordings

[2] The existence of mariachi musical families is tied to the notion of mariachi as a passed-on tradition. In addition, the manner in which the music is taught at any one of the numerous mariachi conferences also contributes to this concept. Students typically read music notation, however to successfully learn these examples (in terms of phrasing, articulation and styling), students follow their master teacher. This observation is based on my own attendance at Austin, San Antonio, San Jose, and Tucson mariachi conferences/workshops.

[3] Rubén Fuentes gave me a copy of a four-page document that briefly outlines the history of Mariachi Vargas and contributions by selected members. I would speculate that this information might be used by journalists and concert promoters.

[4] These titles were listed at <http://www.guitarron.tripod.com/discography2.html> (accessed July 15, 2006). "RF" more than likely stands for "Rubén Fuentes" since, as the author of this website states, this recording is only available at Mariachi Vargas concerts and was probably produced by Rubén Fuentes.

by Mariachi Vargas dating back to 1958.[5] It appears that RCA-Victor was the first to use that phrase on album covers and the practice continued for nearly forty years.

In *Mariachi Music in America* (Sheehy 2006) Natividad "Nati" Cano, an important figure in the development of U.S. mariachi, notes the importance of respecting the limits of tradition and remaining faithful to the "things that are classic" (79). I attended a performance workshop conducted by Maestro Cano at the 2004 Tucson International Mariachi Conference and in that forum he reminded students about the importance of learning to play the traditional repertory (i.e. *son jalisciense*) as well as respecting established performance practices.[6] This perspective is common, especially among older mariachi pedagogues, and indicates a certain parallel with the art music tradition whereby students learn a canon of works under the guidance of a master performer. What are these "things that are classic" which Nati Cano refers to and why are they considered important?

Although there is disagreement among contemporary mariachis regarding changes in repertory and performance practices (Sheehy 2006, 52-57), there is agreement that the

[5] The following record titles using this phrase were noted on a website maintained by John Vela (http://www.guitarron.tripod.com/discography2.html> (accessed July 16, 2006). I have included this list only to highlight the use of the phrase "*El Mejor Mariachi del Mundo"* and this reference list should not be viewed as the complete Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán discography.
El Mejor Mariachi del Mundo,Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, vol 1, 1958 (MKL-1156 RCA-Victor); *El Mejor Mariachi del Mundo, Mariachi Vargas de Tecaltilán, vol. 2*, 1959 (MKL-1224 RCA-Victor); *Pasodobles Con El Mejor Mariachi del Mundo*, 1960 (MKL-1294 RCA-Victor); *Valses Mexicanos con el mejor Mariachi del Mundo, Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán*, 1961 (MKL-1364 RCA-Victor); *Danzones Con El Mejor Mariachi Del Mundo, Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán*, 1964 (MKL-1582 RCA-Victor); *Sones de Jalisco, El Mejor Mariachi del Mundo, Vargas de Tecalitlán*, 1965 (MKS-1653 RCA-Victor); *Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán "el mejor del mundo,"* 1976 (MKS-2064 RCA-Victor); *El Mejor Mariachi del Mundo, Vargas de Tecalitlán, vol.2*, 1978 (MKLA-87 RCA-Victor); *Hablando Claro…El Mejor Mariachi del Mundo, Mariachi Vargas de Tecaltilán*, 1980 (MKS-2205 RCA-Victor); *El Mejor Mariachi del Mundo, Vargas de Tecalitlán, En Concierto*, 1989 (Polygram/Polydor 841-424-2)

[6] For a discussion of the Mexican *son* see Stanford (1972); Fogelquist (1975); Sheehy (1979, 1999).

1930s and 40s were crucial decades for the tradition. Nonetheless, the 1920s was the era that laid the sociopolitical groundwork for the ascension of mariachi. Soon after the end of the Revolution, politics and culture were linked together. Through the processes of reconstructing the "nation" and providing a context for sociopolitical unity, culture became an important element within nationalist discourse. With the rise of commercial radio and films in the early 30s, mariachi mixed with Mexican and U.S. capitalist forces and was propelled into the "golden age" of the 1940s and 50s.[7]

The Emergence of the Modern Mariachi (1920-1942)

Mariachi is a diverse music and dance tradition from Mexico's western region with origins in the states of Nayarit, Jalisco, Colima, and Michoacán; as well as parts of Sinaloa, Aguascalientes, Guanajuato and Guerrero (Jáuregui 1999, 13). As populations from these areas moved to Mexico City in the 1920s, mariachi became part of urban cultural life and entered in new forms and contexts of performance. In the 1930s, mariachi was actively involved in processes of cultural production as the radio, recording and film industries expanded and gained in political and economic power. Through an emerging network of sounds and images, mariachi was transformed from a regional cultural practice with multiple instrumental combinations and performance genres, to a single ensemble form linked to a specific repertory.[8] This *select* version of the mariachi

[7] The "golden age" of Mexican film is generally identified as beginning in 1940 and lasting until approximately 1960. These years also were arguably the period of mariachi's greatest popularity and innovation with performers such as Lola Beltrán (1932-1996), Pedro Infante (1917-1957), José Alfredo Jiménez (1926-1973), Jorge Negrete (1911-1953), Miguel Aceves Mejía (b. 1916) and Javier Solís (1932-1966).

[8] For studies on rural mariachi see Chamorro Escalante (2000); Jáuregui (1990); Ochoa Serrano (1992).

tradition was offered to audiences in Mexico, Spain and the Americas as an authentic representation and, in turn, was validated by unprecedented popularity and iconic status for singing stars such as Tito Guízar and Jorge Negrete. By the early 1940s, the image and voice of the singing *charro* (cowboy) was firmly established as the dominant form within the Mexican media industries. As records, radio, and, particularly, films gained widespread distribution within the global production of culture, the images and sounds of mariachi became markers of identity and linked to notions of *mexicanidad*.[9]

Mariachi as an ensemble and a repertory was dramatically transformed by the production of culture in the postrevolutionary period from 1920 to 1942. In the urban context, mariachi became a new cultural formation and moved into public spheres of discourse and performance.[10] Removed from its rural setting, the modern mariachi expanded and developed new practices defined by urban social life. Public performances in plazas and restaurants were natural transitions, but they could also lead back to more traditional contexts in the forms of *serenatas* and performances in the musical celebration of life-cycle events.[11] In this way, mariachi maintained continuity with the past while adapting to the needs of a diverse urban population that desired entertainment mixed with social meaning. This practice was consistent with the ideals of

[9] This term refers to the aspects of identity and lived Mexican experience that has meaning for large segments of the population. Works that relate to the particular period under consideration include: Bonfil Batalla (1996); Paz (1959); Ramos (1934).

[10] El Tenampa, the famous restaurant/bar in Mexico City, opened in 1923. Featuring Jaliscan cuisine, this was the first restaurant to feature regular mariachi performance. In 1934, Mariachi Coculense de Cirilo Marmolejo became the official mariachi of Lázaro Cárdenas' presidential campaign (Flores y Escalante and Dueñas Herrera 1994, 24). Also in 1934, Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán became the official band of the Mexico City Police Department (Clark 1998, 5).

[11] *Serenatas* are private "serenades" designed to express sentiments of love or affection. Life-cycle performance refers to contexts of a religious and/or secular nature such as baptisms, weddings, funerals, birthdays, Mother's Day, etc.

a Mexican modernity that retained traditions of the past and "the people" while it created new currencies for urban social and economic life (García Canclini 1995, 146). As mariachi became urbanized and participated in new technologies of cultural production, historical links were reified through nationalist efforts that maintained tradition yet allowed for the creation of new genres and styles of performance. These new performance forms resonated with a particular aesthetic that was perceived as the essence of an idealized past; yet, as new creations, were tailored to fit the needs of the production of culture demanded by the new media industries.

Postrevolutionary Cultural Nationalism

The concept of nationalism does not hold to a single definition or particular form (Ishay 1995, 1). In Mexico, nationalism was a way to redefine the "nation" as well as prevent any ideas of ethnic autonomy that may have surfaced following the Revolution (Turino 2003, 194). Nationalist efforts in Mexico focused on stabilizing the government and attempting to forge some sense of unity among the population. Culture was utilized as the vehicle through which the signs and symbols of a re-defined Mexico would emerge. José Vasconcelos, director of the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP) during the Obregón presidency (1920-1924) embarked on a campaign of cultural nationalism that positioned music and the arts as central elements in a new projection Mexican national identity. Under Vasconcelos, culture was a conduit for postrevolutionary nationalism that was applied throughout the country and became even more pervasive through educational radio programs in the late 1920s and into the 30s. Cultural

nationalism was a process that occupied an important place within Mexican nationalist discourse and continued throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s.[12]

Revolutionary nationalism needed images and sounds for its continued influence in Mexican politics and social life. Images and sounds were also effective "reminders" and part of a discourse that continually shaped and re-shaped Mexican political and social thought in the 1920s and 30s. These discourses of revolutionary nationalism stemmed from the need to present a coherent version of the Revolution and its perceived outcomes for the current population, as well as to lay the foundation for the explication of revolutionary ideals for subsequent generations. By conceptualizing the Revolution as an inevitable event that grew out of the excesses of the Díaz regime, revolutionary nationalism and the re-building of the "nation" achieved the formulation of a national culture that advocated a selective memory of the past and valorized *mestizaje* as the binding element in the process.[13] Music and the arts, as expressions of "the people" were utilized in the effort to link national identity with *mestizaje* through visual and musical expressions. Mexico's rich artistic past and its cultural institutions provided the inspirational sources and means for the production of musical works that exemplified nationalist goals within a creative expression of identity.

[12] The administration of President Avila Camacho (1940-1946) strongly supported the film industry and recognized its unique qualities as a tool for the promotion of national unity (Miller 1998, 87-99). It was also during the Camacho administration that revolutionary nationalism that began in 1920 and culminated during the Cárdenas presidency is believed to have ended and a new political conservatism emerged (Niblo 1999, 75-147).

[13] *Mestizaje* refers to the mestizo (mixed indigenous and Spanish blood) make-up of the majority of the Mexican population.

By the end of the nineteenth century, a transplanted European art music tradition was firmly established in Mexico. European instrumental virtuosos and opera companies traveled to Mexico and performed the latest works from Europe as well as compositions by Mexican composers for the concert hall and opera stage. Salon music, also quite popular during this period, not only filled dance halls with the sounds of Vienna, but with music of Mexican composers such as Juventino Rosas (1868-1894), an Otomí Indian and composer of *Sobre las Olas* – one of the most popular waltzes ever written (Béhague 1979, 98). Salon orchestras, known as *orquestas típicas* were a "popular" form of orchestral ensemble.[14] These *orquestas* are notable not only because they performed in the *traje de charro*, but also with regard to their history as rural ad hoc ensembles (Peña 1999). The practice of performing in the *traje de charro*, which would later be identified with the modern mariachi of the 1930s, illustrated the extent to which folkloric expressions were incorporated into music ensembles long before the appearance of the urban mariachi in the mid 1920s.[15]

In the 1920s and 30s, the Mexican art music tradition experienced a renewed sense of purpose as revolutionary nationalism was extended to the arts. The educational policies of the Obregón administration under José Vasconselos at the SEP advocated the teaching and support of cultural nationalism through public education. This initiative led to the creation of works by celebrated Mexican muralists Diego Rivera, José Orozco and

[14] These orchestras consisted of European wind and string instruments along with Mexican and non-Mexican folk instruments such as the guitar, guitarrón, mandolin, marimba, bandolon and psaltery (Strachwitz 1996, 5).

[15] A 1921 photo shows director Miguel Lerdo de Tejada and members of an *orquesta típica* dressed in the *traje de charro* (*El Universal Ilustrado.* año V, núm. 228. jueves 15 de septiembre de 1921, 20).

David Siqueiros along with musical works by Carlos Chávez.[16] Public buildings became canvases for the expression of a revolutionary nationalism that at times conflicted with the government but nonetheless were effective vehicles for the promotion of cultural nationalism and the construction of national identity.

In music, nationalist efforts were led by Manuel Ponce (1882-1948) and Carlos Chávez (1899-1978). Ponce was the first to advocate the use of folkloric material in the creation of a national style. His own works, however, were eventually overshadowed by Chávez, whose music became emblematic of *indigenismo. Indigenismo* was a movement in music and the arts that valorized an indigenous past that was evoked through a re-imagined musical and artistic aesthetic (Béhague 1979, 129). In the 1930s and 40s, Chávez was Mexico's most famous composer and brought the sounds of *indigenismo* to the concert halls of the world. By combining indigenous and European instruments, Chávez created a new sound with the modern symphony orchestra; one that evoked indigenous identity through an idealized sound world. His unique style represented a different form of musical nationalism – one that assimilated indigenous with European elements. This form of musical *mestizaje* reflected the integration of musical elements in the formation of a national style.

Musical forms associated with the mariachi repertory were often quoted by composers and new art music compositions drew from the *jarabe*, *huapango* and *son jalisciense* (Béhague 1979, 97-101; 125-147). These genres, utilized by Blas Galindo

[16] The ballet *El Fuego Nuevo* (*The New Fire*) was written at the request of Vasconcelos in 1921 (Delpar 2000, 562). The sonorities that Chávez employed in this symphonic work were evocations based on indigenous music from Tlaxcala (Parker 1983, 4).

(1910-1992) in *Sones de Mariachi* (1940) and *Huapango* (1941) by José Pablo Moncayo (1912-1958) signaled the extent to which the essentials of mestizo genres (rhythm/melody/harmony and musical instruments) were employed in an effort to produce emblematic works of musical nationalism.

By 1940, mariachi was at the center of the global production of culture with the international success of the film *Allá en el Rancho Grande* (1936) and the soon-to-be mariachi superstar, Jorge Negrete in *¡Ay, Jalisco…no te rajes!* (1941). The use of musical genres associated with the mariachi repertory in works by art music composers demonstrated the extent to which musical nationalism relied upon rural music practices to extend its message of *mestizaje* both inside and outside of the concert hall. Mestizo genres, such as those mentioned above, were "bridges" to a rural and, at times, nostalgic past that satisfied the needs of composers for sonic representations that resonated with accepted notions of revolutionary nationalism.

Mariachi, Folklore and Nationalist Ideology

Nationalism in Mexico did not begin with the election of Álvaro Obregón in 1920. After the French occupation and the execution of Maximilian von Hapsburg in 1867, the Mexican state was determined to prevent future interventions by foreign governments and economic security was seen as the means through which this could be accomplished. During the regime of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1910), rapid modernization was implemented to fulfill an economic dream that, in the end, could not be sustained.

Nevertheless, nationalist sentiment had taken hold within the political discourse of the Porfirian period and after the Revolution achieved an even higher level of significance.

By the early 1900s and regional musical cultures were popular. Indigenous and mestizo music and dance groups performed at social functions for the President and on the occasion of his birthday in 1905, a mariachi from Cocula was brought to the capital by a wealthy hacienda family. Mariachi historian Hermes Rafael recounts this event as described by Rafael Méndez Moreno in *Apuntes Sobre el Pasado de mi Tierra* (1961):

> In September of 1905, Juan Villaseñor, administrator of the hacienda of La Sauceda, in Cocula, was instructed by the Palomar family, owners of said estate, to take the mariachi of Justo Villa to Guadalajara and from there to Mexico City to perform for president general don Porfirio Díaz on his birthday, as well as for that year's Independence Day celebration" (quoted in Rafael 1998, 5-6).

In the early twentieth century, U.S. record companies were actively recording the music of rural cultures in various parts of the world. The performance described above may have led to recordings of *Cuarteto Coculense* by Columbia, Edison and Victor in 1908 and 1909, recognized as the "first" mariachi recordings.[17] The fact that *Cuarteto Coculense* was brought to Mexico City indicates the favorable political connections that were required and it is therefore quite possible these performances led to the recordings.

In the nineteenth century, "collection" was the primary objective in folklore studies. The concept of "evolution" associated with biological organisms was applied to the study of culture along with the belief that societies evolved from "primitive" to "complex" (Bronner 1986, 2). Rural cultural practices were valorized as "praised

[17] These recordings consist of *sones abajeños* (*sones* from the lowlands) and many of the same *sones* were appear on all three labels (Flores y Escalante & Dueñas 1994, 39-41).

residue" and deposits of creativity that by the early twentieth century were feared lost to the processes of modernity (García Canclini 1995, 148). Writings on Mexican rural mestizo forms published in the early twentieth century demonstrated the extent of lingering nineteenth century ideas regarding the "folk" and rural cultural practices. Rural culture was viewed as simplistic and, in the case of musical forms, the tendency was to emphasize Spanish musical influences over indigenous creativity and innovation.

The narrative of musical folklore was evident in the first Mexican music histories published in the late 1920s and early 30s (Campos 1928, 1930; Galindo 1933; Saldívar 1934). In general, rural music and dance practices were considered "pure" cultural expressions and viewed through a European lens. Rural culture was idealized while at the same time "universal" culture (i.e. European) was the standard by which Mexican modernity was measured. Urban musical life, as presented by Campos in *El Folklore Musical de las Ciudades* (1930), did not mention any musical styles other than art music. Folklore and urban culture were not conceptually related at this time; so from Campos' perspective, the only urban music was art music. There is no doubt that urban popular music was being heard in the streets, restaurants and plazas of Mexico City, but for intellectuals such as Campos, rural music and dance forms belonged in the countryside and were therefore not significant to the cultural life of Mexico City.

Spain had strong intellectual and cultural ties with Mexico in the late nineteenth century. For the most part, Spain was not in favor of the 1910 Revolution; nonetheless by the early 1920s, conservative Mexicans were looking to the "motherland" for support and spiritual guidance. These spiritual ties were articulated through *hispanismo,* a

conservative ideology that emphasized Spanish roots within the concept of *mestizaje*. A number of politicians, intellectuals and writers from the postrevolutionary period adhered to the ideals of *hispanismo* and emphasized Spanish influence and heritage whenever possible. This was particularly evident in reference to the people of *Los Altos de Jalisco* (The Highlands of Jalisco), an area in the northeastern part of the state. This region was known for having a unique history and was considered by *hispanistas* to be an enclave of "pure" Spanish blood (Orozco 1998, 12). A number of films from the 1930s and 40s were set in *Los Altos* and songs were written that valorized *los alteños* such as *¡Esos altos de Jalisco!* (*Those Highlands of Jalisco!*) from the film *El peñón de las ánimas* (*The Mount of the Spirits*, 1942). *Los alteños* represented a "whiter" European form that fulfilled the *hispanista* conceptualization of Mexican national identity. As the ideology of *hispanismo* circulated within nationalist discourses and in music and films, *los alteños* represented a physical form that would de-emphasize indigenous influence in the construction and preservation of national heritage.

Los Altos was also known for its rich *charro* tradition. The skills of the *charro* were a significant part of ranch life in the western region and included "breaking wild horses, feeding and breeding cattle, controlling bulls and broncos, and protecting cattle and themselves from the dangers of the range" (Nájera-Ramírez 1994, 2). Out of the daily work of the *charro*, a competition known as *charreada* provided an opportunity for *charros* to display their skills to the community. After the Revolution and the break-up of the hacienda system, the *charreada* became a national sport in Mexico and rings were constructed in cities specifically for this purpose (Palomar Verea 2000, 83). In 1921, the

Asociación de Charros was founded in Mexico City and in 1933 the *Federación Nacional de Charros* served as a national association for the sport (Nájera-Ramírez 1994, 6). These organizations not only provided a structure for competition, but also served as a social and political entity that promoted values constituent with a conservatism and a hierarchical Mexican social structure.

The linkage between mariachi and the *charro* stemmed from the convergence of the *charro* as a historical figure with the social, political and cultural ideals associated with postrevolutionary nationalism. The *charro* of the 1920s and 30s was no longer essential to the rural economy, but was re-invented and packaged by the film industry. The silent film *En la hacienda* (1921) is considered to be the first in the *charro* genre and this particular cinematic form continued with sound films such as *Mano a mano* (*Hand to Hand*) in 1932 (García Riera 1992, 212). However, the singing *charro* did not appear until Tito Guízar's portrayal in *Allá en el Rancho Grande* (*Over at the Big Ranch*) in 1936. Subsequently, the films of Jorge Negrete took the *charro* character to new heights with *¡Ay, Jalisco…no te rajes!* (*Jalisco… Don't Back Down!*, 1941) and cemented the form in 1942 with *¡Así se quiere en Jalisco!* and *El peñon de las ánimas*.

The figure of the *charro* and the sounds of mariachi merged in the films of the 1930s and early 40s. Plots typically allowed the lead *charro* character to display his *machismo* along with qualities of loyalty, honesty and high moral character, through encounters with enemies, love interests and situations of self-sacrifice. His singing voice demonstrated strength, virility and an aesthetic beauty that indicated a distinct change in mariachi performance practice. The singing *charro* and his mariachi effectively set the

course for the development of the tradition through the 1940s and beyond with established standards of performance that have continued to the present day.

Mariachi Historiography

The Mexican music histories of 1928 to 1934 were the first scholarly texts to discuss the musical forms associated with the mariachi repertory. By the 1950s, the narrative and discourse on the urban/rural dichotomy had changed as differentiation was made between *folklore musical* and *música popular* (Béhague 1985, 3). Although discussions of the European art music tradition prevailed in academic discourse, scholarly interest into mestizo musical genres was slowly emerging (Stevenson 1952; Mendoza 1956). In the 1970s and 80s, a number of Mexican popular music histories were produced (Garrido 1974; Geijerstam 1976; Rivas 1979; Reuter 1982, Estrada 1984). These publications, which were primarily historical surveys, included a variety of mestizo musical forms associated with the mariachi repertory.

Early research by U.S. scholars on mariachi was primarily related to aspects of performance and pedagogy. In the 1970s, the Mexican *son* complex was a popular topic (Fogelquist 1975; Sheehy 1979; Stanford 1972) and subsequent investigations were concerned with the implementation of mariachi in the public school curriculum (Bennett 1979; Ensley 1988; Harpole 1980). These studies sought to establish methods for teaching mariachi and outlined the social and cultural benefits from this type activity within the public school setting. Studies that focused on relationships between mariachi and concepts of identity, social context, performance space and discourse appeared in the

late 1980s and have continued into the twenty-first century (Azcona 1999; Henriques 2003; Jáquez 1993, 2000; Pearlman 1988; Sheehy 2006). Fieldwork was also an important element in the research methodologies of these studies that focused primarily on mariachi performance and history within Mexican and Mexican American culture.

The Chicano movement of the 1960s and 70s brought Mexican American cultural politics and issues of racism to the forefront of Anglo American society in California and the Southwest. As a result of the political struggles from that period, Mexican and Mexican American cultural expressions were revitalized as markers of identity and led to the creation of mariachi ensembles in the public schools and the phenomenon known as the mariachi conference.[18] In the late 1980s, pop star Linda Ronstadt produced two recordings: *Canciones de mi Padre* (Songs of my Father) and *Más Canciones* (More Songs) which featured the combined efforts of Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, Mariachi Los Camperos de Nati Cano and Mariachi Sol de México de José Hernández.[19] The success of these recordings and the subsequent performance tour energized the tradition and valorized mariachi particularly for Mexican and Mexican American audiences. In addition, since this project featured Linda Ronstadt, a famous American pop star, an appreciation for mariachi tradition reached a new level of awareness, especially among audiences of non-Mexican descent.

[18] The first high school mariachi ensemble was started by Belle Ortiz in San Antonio, TX in 1970 (Sheehy 2006, 81). The first mariachi conference was held in San Antonio in 1979 and featured Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán. Large-scale annual conferences are currently held in Albuquerque, Fresno, Las Cruces, San Antonio, San Jose and Tucson.

[19] Maestro Rubén Fuentes, general director, arranger and producer for Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán was originally approached about this project by Linda Ronstadt's agent, Peter Asher (Personal Interview, January 18, 2006).

The writing of mariachi history has remained a contested enterprise as researchers and scholars have debated linguistic evidence and ethnographic testimony in an attempt to locate the geographic and ethnic origins of the tradition. Some have argued for Cocula as the "birthplace" (Rafael 1982; Villacis Sosa 1995) while others have advocated regional origin and development (Chamorro Escalante 2000; Jáuregui 1990, 1999; Ochoa Serrano 1992). In recent years, studies on the populations of Mexico's western region during the colonial period have caused scholars to consider African influence, particularly with regard to dance styles and performance aesthetics (Becerra 2002; Ochoa Serrano 2002). One of the important revelations to come out of mariachi scholarship in the 1980s was that the word *mariachi* did not stem from the French word for "marriage," as was long supposed.[20] This realization effectively moved the discourse toward local innovation and led scholars to conduct focused fieldwork in the western region.

The Recording, Radio and Film Industries in Mexico

By 1942, mariachi was identified with the image and voice of Jorge Negrete and the musical genre known as the *canción ranchera*. U.S. transnational media corporations such as RCA (Radio Corporation of America), and NBC (National Broadcasting Company) played active roles in the promotion and distribution of Mexican popular music. As will be discussed in Chapters Three, Four and Five, the efforts of U.S. transnational media companies to expand into Latin American markets intersected with the economic interests of Mexican capitalists to create networks of production and

[20] Up until the 1980's, the popular assumption was that the word *mariachi* came from the French *mariag*. This led to the assertion that *mariachi* derived from *mariag* since the musicians performed primarily at weddings during the Hapsburg occupation in the mid 1860s (Rafael 1982).

distribution. As a result, the Mexican media industries maintained a close relationship with U.S. companies as the image and sound of mariachi was projected throughout Mexico, Latin America, Spain and the southwestern U.S.

Recording technology provided the means for sound commodification and thus presented opportunities for an entirely different form of cultural production. Sound could be captured on a wax cylinder or phonodisc and made available for immediate ownership. The entry of recording companies into capitalist economies created a form of culture value exchange that allowed for the ownership of sound and the means to maintain this relationship. The commodification of sound had a profound effect on musical traditions as media industries became intermediaries in the production of culture. As the interests of radio and record companies merged, repertories became increasingly fixed on specific genres and forms of performance in the 1930s. For example, a *son jalisciense* that might have had eight verses would be shortened so that it could be played in three and one-half minutes – the standard recording time length for a 78rpm disc (Martínez Barajas 2005, personal interview). In general, the impact of records and their means of production effectively altered repertories and solidified aspects of performance that came to be understood as representative of a tradition.

Nearly ten years after the emergence of privately-owned radio stations in Mexico, the record industry was still dominated by U.S. companies. Since the early decades of the twentieth century U.S. record companies controlled the technology as well as the means for distribution. As mentioned earlier, Edison, Victor and Columbia made the first recordings of *Cuarteto Coculense* on wax cylinders in 1908 and 1909. In the 1920s,

Mariachi Coculense de Cirilo Marmolejo recorded 78 rpm discs for Victor (Flores y Escalante & Dueñas 1994, 61) and, in the 1940s Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán signed an exclusive contract with RCA Victor (Fuentes Gassón, personal interview, January 18, 2006, Mexico City). In 1936 the first Mexican-owned record label, Discos Peerless, was founded (Zolov 1999, 20). The gap between Mexican-owned and U.S. record companies illustrates the extent to which U.S. record labels controlled the market as the Mexican popular music industry emerged in the 1930s.

The development of radio in Mexico was however quite different from the record industry. The relative simplicity of radio transmission outweighed the technological capital required for record production and soon stations appeared in various parts of the country. The "first" experimental station in Monterrey, Nuevo León in 1919 was built by Constentino de Tárnava and the initial radio broadcast in Mexico City occurred on the night of September 27, 1921.[21] The creation of a national radio broadcast system was proposed in 1922 and outlined a combination of private and government-controlled stations (Baquera Mejia 29). The government not only wanted to keep costs down and encourage entrepreneurs, it also did not want a repeat of foreign-controlled service as occurred with the telegraph and telephone.[22]

Obregón installed powerful transmitters throughout the country so that his political messages could reach the widest possible audience (ibid.). The policy of the government was to control the flow of information and provide official news, weather

[21] Tárnava's first broadcast was a musical program that included performances by tenor José Mojica and Italian Pablo Tosti (Flores y Escalante & Dueñas 2000, 9).
[22] Telegraph operations were subsidized in 1882 by the Bell Telephone Co. and Ericsson, also a U.S. company, initiated telephone service in 1903 (Mejía Barquera 1989, 19-22).

forecasts and propaganda, while private stations would broadcast music and other types of news. This led to the appearance of a number of private stations that would be instrumental in the production of culture in the 1930s and onward. And, as government stations began to broadcast music programs in association with the educational policy of cultural nationalism, regional musical forms were heard throughout the nation.

The first Mexican-produced sound film, *Santa*, premiered in 1931 and featured music by Agustín Lara. Films that followed included a mixture of dramas, biographies and rural-themed films. In 1936, the Mexican film industry had its greatest success with *Allá en el Rancho Grande*. The director, Fernando de Fuentes, produced some notable revolutionary-themed films earlier in the decade (i.e. *El prisionero trece*, 1933; *El compadre Mendoza*, 1933; ¡*Vámonos con Pancho Villa!*, 1935) however, *Allá en el Rancho Grande* was his first film in the new genre known *comedia ranchera*.[23] With distribution throughout Mexico, Spain and the Americas, the Mexican film industry enjoyed its greatest expansion after the success of *Allá en el Rancho Grande.* A series of *comedia ranchera* films soon followed and new singing *charros* such as Jorge Negrete and Pedro Infante set the course for the genre well into the 1950s.[24]

Records, radio, and film played a critical role in the development, production and expression of Mexican national identity during the postrevolutionary period of 1920-

[23] *Comedia ranchera* refers to a genre of Mexican film that was originally set in the hacienda and featured a variety of characters (with different levels of comedic dialogue and/or action) including the *singing charro* accompanied by either a trio of musicians and/or a mariachi. The elements of music, drama and comedy combined to form this particular film genre.

[24] Jorge Negrete continued to make films until just before his death in 1953. Pedro Infante began his *charro* film career with *Jesusita en Chihuahua* in 1942 and also continued into the 1950s. The well-known composer/singer Jose Alfredo Jiménez (1926-1973) along with singers Javier Solis (1932-1966) and Vicente Fernández (b. 1940) continued the *charro* film tradition until the 1970s.

1942. Radio programs such as *La hora nacional* featured art and popular music expressions, an example of the government's efforts to bridge class differences and further the nationalist message.[25] Recordings that featured Tito Guízar and Jorge Negrete carried the mariachi tradition into the 1940s and 50s and they became the voices for an expression of *mexicanidad.* Films, probably the most powerful of all, provided sonic and visual representations of the *charro* and mariachi for a national and international audience. In the electronic transmission of sounds and images, mariachi became part of a media-produced expression of *mexicanidad* that mixed entertainment with nationalist sentiment through idealized versions of the past.

Theoretical Orientations

The postrevolutionary period from 1920 through the early 40s was an era of intermittent social and political crises coupled with a deliberate cultural movement toward national unity. Culture was utilized as a vehicle for the expression of revolutionary nationalism and symbolized Mexico's uneasy relationship with modernity and the forces of capitalism. In order to approach the relationship between music, the media industries and nationalism, it is necessary to recognize the political, economic and social realities of the postrevolutionary period and the extent to Mexican national identity was re-defined. The infusion of political and cultural ideologies along with participation of transnational media corporations produced contradictory and uneven results, yet this

[25] *La hora nacional* is a one-hour weekly radio show that is broadcast throughout Mexico on Sunday nights from 10pm-11pm. The show debuted in July of 1937 and was a required broadcast for all commercial and government stations (Hayes 2000, 67). In the 1930s through the 50s, *La hora nacional* typically featured well-known artists and ensembles performing a variety of musical styles.

was the sociopolitical and cultural climate under which the construction of the "new" nation took place.

The project of modernity inspired a break with "tradition" and the ways of the past in favor of a re-organized society of bureaucratic institutions supervised by a "scientific rationalism" (Flores 2002, 2). As a result, "tradition" was transformed and "invented" through accepted notions of the past with relationships of contemporary practice (Hobsbawm 1983, 1). The mixture of technology and cultural practice had a dramatic effect on the processes of production and while technology alone could not bring about cultural transformation, the manner in which it was implemented significantly altered the perception and expression of cultural forms. "Tradition" folded into the interests of sociopolitical and cultural ideologies that were refashioned through the intermingling of capitalist modernity and postrevolutionary nationalism.

The concept of nationalism received renewed attention among scholars in the 1980s. Notable works by Anderson (1983); Gellner (1983); Handler (1988) and Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) demonstrated ways in which nationalism interacts with politics and culture in the construction of the "nation." These studies tended to view culture as a homogenizing force and the "glue" that held nations together. More recent scholarship however has opened the conceptual frame of nationalism beyond the cultural homogeneity/heterogeneity debate and posits them "as two sides of the nationalist coin, rather than facing each other across a nationalist divide" (Wade 2000, 13). In *Music, Race and Nation* (2000) Peter Wade suggests that theories of nationalism should not be centered on elite versus the masses dichotomy, but on how cultural factors "can be

recombined and resignified, without their meaning being exhausted or fixed by simplistic oppositions" (13-14).

The discourse of nationalism engages social and political life with the objective of "creating or sustaining broad-based nationalist sentiment (Turino 2003, 174). Cultural nationalism appropriates symbols that represent the "nation" in an effort to demonstrate uniqueness as well as engender a sense of national unity. Cultural nationalism is essential to the nationalist enterprise and music and arts are central to its success (ibid., 175).

Specifically, musical nationalism is "music used to create, sustain, or change an identity unit that conceives of itself as a nation…" (ibid.). The emblematic value of music is powerful and mass communication technologies reach vast numbers of people. As a tool of nationalist discourse, music and the conceptual associations that link with it have a significant impact on nationalist sentiment and the construction of identity. In Mexico, musical nationalism emerged through the folkloric expressions of regional communities that were broadcast throughout the nation. The mix of government and commercial interests fueled the transformation of mariachi at the national level and through the media production of culture, re-fashioned it for popular consumption.

Cultural nationalism also provides a way to acknowledge and simultaneously mask regional difference or political tensions that may exist. As Thomas Turino points out:

> Cultural nationalist programs typically seek to celebrate ethnic and regional distinctiveness ('folkways' contrasted with cosmopolitan forms and practices) to define the uniqueness of a given nation. But they must also carefully balance this

> with incorporating such distinctions into the very definition of the nation so as to diffuse cultural difference as a resource for separatism (2003, 194).

In the western region, the *Cristero* Rebellion (1926-1929) was a significant act of revolt against the government and cost 90,000 lives (Aguilar Camín and Meyer, 86). In response to restrictions placed on the activities of the Catholic Church, peasants in the states of Durango, Colima, Guererro, Jalisco, Michoacán, Nayrit and Zacatecas took-up arms against the government. Fighting only stopped when a negotiated settlement was reached with the help of the U.S. ambassador (Meyer 1991, 215). Cultural nationalism within nationalist discourse seeks to both "celebrate" as well as control the elements of cultural expression. The "masking" of a regional tradition such as mariachi suggests the possibility that this music may have been valorized as *the* national sound symbol based on the social and political tensions that stemmed from the *Cristero* Rebellion. In this way, cultural/musical nationalism and the commercial media may have participated in the elevation of the tradition while, at the same time, tension was diffused and national unity retained.

Connected to the nationalist project is the notion of "selective tradition" which refers to "an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a pre-shaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification (Williams 1977, 115). Mariachi, as a rural music and dance tradition, originally included a number of instrumental ensembles, genres and performance contexts; yet, the string version from the area of Cocula became the form through which a national symbol emerged. Why were other regional forms left out? Why did mariachi

rise to the level of national ensemble, while others did not? These questions, generated by the notion of selective tradition, highlight the importance of examining relationships between musical practice, political/cultural ideology and the media production of culture in an effort to understand mariachi's ascension to the level of national symbol.

The notion of "style as process" (Feld 1994) as a conceptual frame considers the interactive and dynamic nature of musical production and brings together records, radio, and film as distinct cultural processes with implications for the development of musical style. The media industries altered traditional ways and implemented generalized methods of production to meet capitalist demands. Musical "style as process" moves the conceptualization of sound beyond the level of "influence" to how the sounds themselves were changed and manipulated through the production of culture. As processes, the record, radio and film industries each had their distinctive methods of production and means of distribution. The notion of "style as process" positions music performance within the economic, political and cultural environment that shaped cultural production for national and international consumption. As part of a theoretical perspective on the relationship between musical production and the media industries, it is worth considering the nature of the radio, recording and film industries as entities that developed certain practices through processes of commodification that affected, not only how music was produced, but in what form the "message" of cultural nationalism was transmitted to a global audience.

Mariachi and the Making of a Historical Ethnomusicology

In recent years, historical studies have become more common in the field of ethnomusicology. Works on particular genres and musical styles have looked to texts, sound recordings, musical analysis, performance practices and ethnography in the course of scholarly research. Ethnomusicological studies typically involve the study of current musical practices with active members and a historical ethnomusicology utilizes a similar, yet nuanced approach. Works in the field of ethnomusicology that have focused on the social history of popular music genres and styles (Austerlitz 1997; Averill 1997; Erlmann 1991; Guilbault 1993; Moore 1997; Pacini-Hernandez 1995; Peña 1985, 1999; Simonett 2001) resonate in various ways with this study. These works engaged music history and forms of identity in relation to cultural production within social and political spheres

Recent works on Mexican radio, film and cultural history (Fein 1993, 2001; Hayes 2000; Pérez Montfort 1994; Rubenstein 2001; Saragoza 2001; Zolov 1999, 2001) gave considerable impetus to this study. In addition, José Orozco's 1998 dissertation on the notion of regional identity and history of Los Altos de Jalisco triggered research questions regarding the relationship between ranch culture, ethnic identity and the projection of cultural nationalism in the 1930s and 40s. These works established a starting point for this project and opened up possibilities for the conceptualization of mariachi historical development as influenced by processes of media production in the postrevolutionary period.

The notion of fieldwork takes on a different meaning when dealing with historical subjects along with specific questions related to methodology. Philip Bohlman addresses this particular theoretical/methodological paradox in "Fieldwork in the Ethnomusicological Past" (1997) and posits the notion of the "field" as a space between the past and the present where culture "no longer forms into systems, but rather becomes fluid, ephemeral, and contested" (140). Bohlman goes on to say:

> For the ethnomusicological fieldworker the boundaries between the past and the present become themselves the 'field', a space allowing one to experience and represent musical practices that are not simply inscriptions of the historical past or aural events of the immediate present" (ibid.).

A goal of this study is to examine those spaces where Mexican cultural history was "performed" (in politics, society and the arts) in order to gain a better understanding of the relationships between musical production, the electronic media industries and nationalism.

In the making of a historical ethnomusicology, there are a variety of ways to "recapture" the past and in the process hopefully reveal aspects of musical practice that have either escaped consideration or been previously ignored. During the course of my research, I attempted to locate the past through films, radio shows, sound recordings, interviews and texts. The number of consultants alive today who were active in mariachi performance in the 1930s (or even the 1940s), is quite small. I did however have the opportunity to interview Maestro Rubén Fuentes who joined Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán in 1944 and also was a composer/arranger for a number of Mexican popular music artists. Other interviews included José "Pepe" Martínez, music director of

Mariachi Vargas since 1975, as well as José Flores y Escalante and Pablo Herrera Dueñas of Radio XEB in Mexico City and Bob Orozco, a producer in Spanish-language radio and television in Tucson, AZ in the 1950s and 60s. Additionally, I was able to access the sound recording archive of Radio XEW, now part of Televisa Radio, as well as a significant number of films produced between 1932 and 1942 that are housed at the Filmoteca (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) and the Cineteca Nacional in Mexico City. Texts and other archival sources were accessed through the libraries of the Filmoteca and Cineteca Nacional, along with the Biblioteca Nacional, Hemeroteca Nacional, Biblioteca de las Artes (Centro Nacional de las Artes [CENIDIM]), and the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection at The University of Texas at Austin.

As a researcher, my interest in mariachi stems from the desire to explore the ways that music moves through our daily lives at various levels of experience. From broad notions of national identity to intimate family celebrations, mariachi engages social and cultural life. My wife's grandfather and uncles were active mariachis and *orquesta* musicians in the Santa Clara and San Joaquin valleys in the 1950s and 60s. This family connection gave me some perspective on the tradition and initiated questions. My grandmother played the *viola* an Azorean guitar-like instrument at Portuguese *festas* in Mission San Jose, California and at a young age, I developed an interest in the guitar and guitar-like instruments. My musical "entrance" into mariachi was through the *vihuela*, one of the instruments of the *armonia*.[26] In the mid 1990s I formed a student mariachi

[26] *Armonia* (harmony) is the term used for the section that is typically comprised of guitar, *vihuela* and *guitarrón.*

ensemble in the Department of Music at Humboldt State University in Arcata, California and my academic experience in mariachi continued at The University of Texas as director of Mariachi Paredes de Tejastitlán from 2001 to 2005.

Mariachi was thrust into processes of cultural production and infused with a modern aesthetic of musical style in the 1920s. With the emergence of radio and sound films in the early 1930s, mariachi became a vehicle for the expression of a national identity that referenced its rural roots while adapting to the media production of the electronic age. As a result, vocal, instrumental and compositional practices were dramatically altered through new methods of production associated with the popular music industry.

The year 1920 was chosen as the starting point for this study since that year marked the election of Álvaro Obregón and the beginning of revolutionary nationalism. The films released in 1942 represent a dividing line in the development of the *comedia ranchera* and the cinema-model of the singing *charro*. *¡Ay, Jalisco… no te rajes!*, (1941) was an important milestone not only for the genre, but for the *charro* figure as portrayed by Jorge Negrete and was followed by *¡Así se quiere en Jalisco!* and *El peñón de las ánimas* in 1942. Other films in 1942 that solidified the *charro* figure included *Jesusita en Chihuahua* starring Pedro Infante and *Soy puro mexicano* with Pedro Armendáriz.[27]

[27] *Jesusita en Chihuahua* (1942) was Pedro Infante's first film as a lead character and he would go on to star in numerous *charro* films of the 1940s and 50s. Although Pedro Armendáriz was not a singing *charro*, his contribution to the *charro* figure was important in the construction of the *ranchera* genre. *Soy puro mexicano* (1942) was the first World War II-themed *charro* film and presented a different form of the *charro* character.

This dissertation uncovers threads of change that led to the transformation of mariachi as an ensemble and a repertory. The history of mariachi is vast and involves the study of relationships between music, society, politics and culture. It is hoped that this project sheds some light on the nature of the modern mariachi as a rural ensemble that was carried to national and international prominence through processes of Mexican and U.S. media production intertwined cultural politics and nationalism.

This first chapter has provided an overview of the main issues and highlighted aspects of history, politics and society in the construction of the *charro* figure and mariachi. The conceptual frame of with respect to nationalism, identity, the media industries and processes of musical production will be reinforced throughout this study. Each of these elements will be incorporated into succeeding chapters since they represent interrelated aspects of mariachi development.

Chapter Two discusses the relationship between music, ideology and identity in the postrevolutionary period. *Hispanismo* as a cultural discourse was rooted in Spain as the "spiritual motherland" of Mexico. *Indigenismo*, a movement in the arts in the 1920s through the mid 1940s, exhibited a re-imagined indigenous world along with the re-claiming of indigenous identity. This chapter highlights the literature on these nationalist discourses and the region of *Los Altos de Jalisco* as a focal point of *hispanismo* ideology.

Chapter Three addresses the history of the record industry in Mexico and the extent to which sound recordings affected cultural production in relation to mariachi. U.S. companies such as Columbia and Victor had a significant influence on the development of Mexican popular music and recorded some of the most well-known

performers. Other companies such as Peerless, Musart and Orfeon followed and comprised the major Mexican-owned record companies from the late 1930s and into the 1940s and 50s. This chapter will consider the nature of sound recording and its impact on the standardization of mariachi performance practices and formation of the repertory.

Radio was extremely important to the spread of cultural nationalism. Through broadcasts by government and privately-owned stations, works by art music composers were presented alongside popular music forms. Chapter Four will look at the beginnings of government and commercial radio in Mexico and, in particular U.S. involvement in the development of the industry. In addition, radio stations XFX and XEW will be highlighted not only for their participation in the production of culture, but for practices and programming that were crucial for the continued evocation of cultural nationalism throughout the 1930s and early 40s.

The Mexican film industry had the most profound influence on the development of mariachi in the postrevolutionary period. Silent films produced the first image-driven storylines with the *charro* character and reinforced popular conceptualizations of rural culture. Sound films first appeared in 1931 and with *Allá en el Rancho Grande* (1936) the Mexican film industry gained international recognition. This chapter will examine specific films from the 1930s and 40s for their contribution to the popularization of the *charro* figure and the development of mariachi as an ensemble and a repertory. Music was a defining characteristic of the *comedia ranchera* and songs from these films established a new repertory through the genre known as *canción ranchera*.

The final chapter considers the notion authenticity and how it was re-created through composition and performance practices in the 1930s and early 40s. Composers Lorenzo Barcelata and Manuel Esperón wrote new works that referenced the rural roots of mariachi, yet became regarded as "authentic" representations of the tradition. The purpose of this chapter is to consider the ways in which musical materials were manipulated and the manner in which the mariachi tradition has been maintained by its practitioners.

The transformation of the mariachi from a regional ensemble to national symbol of *mexicanidad* stemmed from sociopolitical and cultural processes in the aftermath of the Revolution. Nationalist efforts to promote unity among the classes latched on to the image and sound of the mariachi as a truly Mexican expression. As of this writing, there has been little discussion about mariachi and its links to the media industries in the projection of cultural nationalism. As a visual and sound marker of identity, mariachi transcended social class yet masked difference through its absorption of regional repertories. This project offers insight into the nature of this transformation as well as a conceptual frame for examining the emergence of the modern mariachi in relation to musical production, the media industries and postrevolutionary nationalism.

Chapter Two: Music, Ideology and Postrevolutionary Nationalism

Antecedents to Revolution

After three-hundred years of colonial rule, Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821. Political stability, however, proved elusive over the next four decades as Mexico struggled with ineffective leadership, civil uprisings and wars with the U.S. and France. At the core of Mexican national political debate in the mid-nineteenth century was the tension between the advocacy for a strong central government, favored by the liberals, and the retention of regional autonomy, a position held by conservatives. In general, liberals sought to diminish the power of the Catholic Church and strengthen the State as well as the office of the president. Conservatives, on the other hand, were wary of centralized government and wanted local power retained by the states and locally in the hands of the *caudillo* or political "boss." The debate took a liberal turn when federalist Benito Juárez (1806-1872), a full-blooded Zapotec Indian, was declared president in 1861. Nonetheless, landholding conservatives continued to support the Church and uphold its social values. Within the context of this political tension between liberals and conservatives, the "modern" Mexican state began to take shape.[28]

After decades of economic and political instability along with the loss of vast northern territories to the United States, Mexico was deep in debt and forced to

[28] For a review of nineteenth century Mexican political history consult Aguilar Camín and Meyer (1993); Archer (2000); Katz (1991); Meyer (1991) and Vanderwood (2000).

concentrate its resources on rebuilding the economy. One month after taking office, Juarez stopped payment on debts to Britain, France and Spain (Vanderwood 2000, 380). The Europeans were incensed. At first, they planned to invade Veracruz in order to force repayment; however Napoleon III had a more ambitious plan – one that included not only invasion, but the occupation of Mexico. Napoleon III believed that this particular moment represented an opportunity to gain a foothold in the hemisphere while the U.S. was busy with its own Civil War (1861-1865). Britain and Spain did not support this operation; nevertheless Napoleon III was undeterred and convinced an Austrian nobleman, Maximilian von Hapsburg, to be his monarch. He also assured Maximilian that French troops would remain in Mexico until 1873 when it was assumed that the Austrian nobleman would be securely in power and able to maintain control with his own military forces.

As the French moved to take Mexico, President Juárez fled to the northern part of the country in an effort to hold his government together. After the initial loss at the Battle of Puebla in 1862 the French re-grouped and pushed on to Mexico City.[29] The Mexican army and guerilla resistance, however, were strong and kept pressure on the French over the next three years. In 1866, Napoleon III finally realized the extent of his miscalculation and informed Maximilian that French troops were being withdrawn. By 1867, Maximilian was on his own - six years earlier than promised. Although he had the opportunity to leave, Maximilian remained in Mexico in order to try and regain control.

[29] At the Battle of Puebla, the Mexican army was considerably outnumbered yet was able to defeat invading French forces. This event is recalled each year by the celebration known as *Cinco de Mayo* (5th of May).

With the majority of the population against him, he was arrested, put on trial and sentenced to death by firing squad. Juárez received numerous pleas from European leaders to spare Maximilian. He responded by saying: "We inherit the indigenous nationality of the Aztecs, and in full enjoyment of it, we recognize no foreign sovereigns, no judges, and no arbiter" (quoted in Vanderwood 2000, 391). This statement ushered in a new era in Mexican national politics whereby the notion of indigenous identity would become highly developed and strategically inserted into political discourse especially in the two decades following the end of the Revolution.

With the execution of Maximilian von Habsburg in 1867, Mexico exerted its national sovereignty and political independence. After wars with Spain, the U.S. and France, Mexico was committed to rebuilding its economy and believed that economic strength would ensure independence and acceptance in the global community of "modern" nations. Returning Juárez to power was a vital step in that direction; however he would soon be challenged for the presidency. Following his success at Puebla, General Porfirio Díaz (1830-1915) gained in stature and notoriety. As a result of his new celebrity status, Díaz ran for president against Juarez in 1867. Juarez easily won that election as well as a subsequent challenge by Díaz in 1871. After the second loss, Díaz asserted that the election was fraudulent and attempted to incite a popular revolt. His brother Félix assembled a fighting force from their home state of Oaxaca and other troops were enlisted by a number of supportive northern generals (Katz 1991, 61) Díaz believed that if he could take Mexico City, Juárez would have no choice but to relinquish power. Unexpectedly, Juarez's troops intercepted the rebels outside the city and Díaz withdrew.

As fate would have it, Juarez died of a heart attack a short time later. Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, was next in the line of succession and immediately called for a new election in 1872. Lerdo de Tejada won that election and for the third time Díaz's political ambitions were thwarted.

In 1876, Díaz engineered a second revolt. Although Lerdo de Tejada had won the election of 1875, the new Supreme Court Justice, José María Iglesias, would not ratify the outcome. Again, fraud was cited and, in fact, Iglesias attempted to assume the presidency himself. This split in the ruling government provided an opening for Díaz' second call to revolt. After some brief skirmishes with Lerdo de Tejada's troops, Díaz assumed the presidency in 1877 and Lerdo de Tejada was forced to flee the country. Except for a brief period from 1880 to 1884 when he nominally turned the government over to General Manuel González (while still maintaining control), Díaz was president and remained in office until he was forced out in 1911.

Porfirio Díaz was in power during Mexico's late nineteenth and early twentieth struggles with modernity and the forces of capitalism. Rapid economic growth was fueled by foreign investment and encouraged through generous tax incentives, banking concessions and political favors. Fast-paced modernization required large amounts of capital and foreign nations were more than willing to comply. Britain, Germany, and especially the United States injected cash, technology and human resources into the Mexican economy. This economic intervention produced uneven and, in the end, disastrous results. Although industries such as mining, textiles and agriculture expanded at an accelerated rate, the interests of labor were ignored as workers suffered from low

wages and poor working conditions. Strikes became more common as workers organized into unions and began to exert their political influence.[30] The elite reaped the benefits of modern life while the social and economic divide grew wider and gave the working and lower classes little hope for change. Although the building of a railway system and improvements in industrial production suggested a bright economic future, political and social realities steered Mexico in a different direction - one that would eventually lead to complete a sociopolitical breakdown and civil war.

After the war with the United States (1846-48) and the political instability that followed the presidency of Santa Ana in the 1850s, there was a feeling among some politicians that a quicker pace to modernization was what the country needed. The liberal federalists were in favor of this agenda which called for a more secularized society (thus reducing the power of the Catholic Church), the ensured protections of human rights and private property, and a commitment to a competitive Mexican capitalist economy (Vanderwood 2000, 371). Although conservatives took exception to efforts against the Church, in general they shared these goals but with a decidedly slower and deliberate rate of social and economic change. Whether liberal or conservative, Mexico was under considerable pressure to maintain its sovereignty given the recent war with the U.S. as well as French occupation. Mexican leaders desired a fast track modernization in the hope that such an effort would counteract any attempts by foreigners to intervene or

[30] A strike in 1906 at the Cananea copper mine in the state of Sonora lasted for three days and resulted in ten dead and hundreds arrested (Aguilar Camín and Lorenz 1993, 7). In 1907, the strike at the Río Blanco textile factory in Veracruz started with 7,083 workers and ended with 5,512. The 1,571 workers that were unaccounted for either escaped, were arrested or killed (ibid. 9).

occupy Mexican territory. Rapid modernization would enhance Mexico's image in the world and lend respectability to its capitalist ambitions.[31]

Positivism and the Díaz Regime

Positivism, an epistemological theory as well as a method for acquiring knowledge, is associated with the philosopher Auguste Comte (1798-1857) and offered liberal leaders "an instrument in the service of their interests" that would "help sustain their ideals" (Zea 1943, 77). As a doctrine, positivism linked evolutionary science with society. [32] For Mexico's liberal leaders of the late nineteenth century, positivism fulfilled their need to establish sovereignty after centuries of Spanish domination along with U.S. imperialism and French occupation. As a result, the goals of positivism as a means to acquire knowledge fit their objectives and desires for political and social stability as well as full participation in a vigorous Mexican modernity.

"Order and Progress" was the slogan of the Díaz regime and dictatorship was the price for political stability. Except for Benito Juárez, Mexico had endured decades of ineffective, short-termed leaders and Díaz's skill at keeping the military in check while dividing any opposition was remarkable given Mexico's nineteenth century political history. Díaz created a class of government bureaucrats known as the *cientificos* (literally "men of science") who became very powerful political insiders and dispensed as well as received favors. As a group, the *cientificos* were a kind of political aristocracy and

[31] For a historical overview of the Juárez period and the emergence of Díaz see Katz (1995); Buffington and French (2000)

[32] Comte was an inspirational figure in the rise of sociology as a field of study and the notion of "social physics". As a method, positivism sought "to discover the immutable universal laws that govern the universe by using observation, experimentation and calculation" (Macey, 2000, 303).

enriched themselves by virtue of their positions in the government bureaucracy. The *hacendados* and landholding elite were wary of the *cientificos* level of access and power within the Díaz government. In fact, many landowners felt the *cientificos* had acquired too much political power and this caused them to become dissatisfied with Díaz and, along with the president's inability to deal with labor uprisings, likely influenced their decision not to support him when Francisco Madero called for change in 1908.[33]

The *cientificos*, along with other members of the political and social elite, believed that in order for Mexico to fully participate in the project of modernity it must produce a citizenry that could function within the principles of democratic politics – a perceived goal of the Díaz regime. While this obviously contradicted the reality of Porfirian dictatorship, in the early years of the Díaz presidency, social evolution was believed to be the key to the creation of a modern Mexico. Political stability was perceived as a necessary step by the middle and upper classes who hoped to participate in an expanding global modernity. As a result of the Díaz regime's relentless drive for economic growth, however, Mexican society crumbled. The working and lower classes became more vocal in their protests and society increasingly fragmented. Many landowners and urban elites grew nervous and eventually lost confidence in Díaz's ability to maintain social and political control.

Ironically, it was precisely the sentiments evoked by the regime's "Order and Progress" slogan that provided the contexts and conditions for an induced political, social

[33] In 1908, Francisco Madero published a book on the subject of presidential succession. In it he identified "absolutism and the unlimited power of one man" as the fundamental problems keeping Mexico from becoming a modern and democratic state (Katz 1991, 120).

and economic clash between Mexican society and the forces of capitalist modernity. Prior to 1910, foreign governments held Díaz in high regard and it appeared that Mexico would soon be on par with Europe. However, sociopolitical reality produced a different result as the economy declined, society crumbled and faith was lost. The subsequent Mexican Revolution was not the result of any one particular aspect (economic, political or social) ignored by the Díaz regime, although there were certainly many failures (Buffington and French 2000, 403). Nevertheless, the social and political conditions that resulted from Díaz' thirty-year dictatorship and the extent of his power were such that revolution was likely the only alternative that had the potential to produce substantive change.

Musical Culture in Nineteenth Century Mexico

In the nineteenth century, the Mexican art music tradition mirrored that of Europe with the preferred performance forms being Italian opera, musical theater, vocal art songs and solo piano (Béhague 1979, 97). Mexico City's abundance of musical activities, chronicled by Rubén Campos in *El Folklore Musical de las Ciudades* (1930), indicated the popularity and success that the transplanted European art music tradition enjoyed in urban Mexican musical culture, particularly in the latter part of the century. Campos noted the number and variety of concerts in theaters, music halls and conservatories throughout the city along with the repertory that was performed. These programs not only included works by European composers, but Mexican art music composers as well and indicated an active music scene.

The variety of performance forms and venues also reflected Mexico City's growing cultural importance during this particular period. Musical theater was quite popular and included *zarzuela,* a type of Spanish "light" opera, the *tonadilla*, a satirical short skit and *sainete,* a musical farce typically performed at the end of the evening (Stevenson 1952, 174-175). The first music conservatory in Mexico City opened in 1825 under the direction of the composer José Mariano Elízaga, but due to a lack of financial support, closed a short time later. Finally in 1866, the *Sociedad Filarmónica Mexicana* (Mexican Philharmonic Society) successfully established a conservatory and in 1877 it became known as the *Conservatorio Nacional de Música* (National Conservatory of Music) (ibid.). As one of the most important cities in the Western Hemisphere, Mexico City became increasingly cosmopolitan and its musical activities indicated its cultural status and desire to be on par with Paris, London and Madrid.

The *orquesta típica* (folk orchestra), a mixed string/wind ensemble of five to seven players dates from at least the early nineteenth century (Peña 1999, 80). The repertory for this ensemble included the popular dances of Europe such as the waltz, polka, *pasodoble*, march, one-step and schottische. A typical group also included regional instruments such as the *guitarrón*.[34] In 1884, the first nationalist *orquesta típica* was started at the *Conservatorio Nacional de Música* and exemplified the romantic nationalist movement that emerged in the late nineteenth century (ibid., 82). Instrumentation varied among *orquestas típicas* however, the use of instruments like the

[34] The *guitarrón* is the large, six-stringed bass instrument used in the modern mariachi.

guitarrón were distinguishing markers of the tradition and illustrated the ensemble's hybrid nature.

Orquestas típicas appeared during a unique period in Mexican cultural history as musical practices moved from the rural to the urban context. Manuel Peña has speculated on the relationship between the *orquesta típica* and mariachi and the possibility that the modern mariachi may have emerged from the rural *orquesta típica* (Peña 1999, 82). The mariachi tradition definitely exhibited an ad hoc nature in the rural setting, just as the *orquesta típica*, and these ensembles shared similar repertories. Given the transregional nature of the mariachi tradition (Chamorro 2000) it is likely that mixed instrument ensembles co-existed and at some point in the nineteenth century, the smaller string ensemble emerged as the selected mariachi form. This development may have been based on a musical aesthetic that preferred string sounds over winds or it may simply have been due to the initiative of a politically-connected, wealthy *hacendado* who brought this particular form of rural music to the attention of political and social elites as described in Chapter One. In any event, there appears to be reason to suspect a close relationship between the two ensembles given their early ad hoc natures and a preference for stringed instruments.

Musical nationalism was a major influence in compositional practice as composers turned to rural expressions as source materials in the creation of new works. Musical products of rural culture became a well-spring for appropriation and innovation. The notions of "purity" and "simplicity" attributed to rural cultural expressions were rooted in positivist ideals that embraced the concepts of social evolution. From the

nineteenth century perspective, rural cultures were pre-modern repositories of human expression that could be accessed for nationalist purposes. In Mexico, the first examples of nationalist composition appeared in the 1860s as piano virtuosi created arrangements of national airs and wrote new compositions that incorporated folk themes and genres (Béhague 1979, 98-99).[35] Composers accessed rural genres such as the *son*[36] and *jarabe*[37] in an effort to produce music of a national character that would appeal to audiences regardless of class or social standing. Since the intended audiences for these compositions were typically urban and middle to upper class, the choice of musical genres from the western region (such as the *jarabe*, which had already achieved a national level of recognition in popular theater) indicated the importance of that area and its significance in nationalist projections.

In general, the idea of musical nationalism was tied to the notion of "traits" and the manner in which rural culture was viewed and conceptualized in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A distinctive melody, rhythm, or harmonic pattern of a rural folk tradition was appropriated through compositional processes and elevated as an expression of "the people."[38] The composer endeavored to manipulate musical elements in such a way that the art music style was preserved, while musical quotations or

[35] The term national air (*aires nacionales*) refers to a regional song composed by an unknown composer that had achieved widespread popularity. In Mexican culture, *Las Mañanitas* is a classic example of this category of national song.
[36] *Son* is a generic term that refers to a complex of regional Mexican folk music and dance genres with specific characteristics and styles of performance practice.
[37] *Jarabe* literally means "syrup" and is a music and dance genre that is made-up of a string of tunes. The most famous *jarabe* is the *Jarabe Tapatío*, Mexico's national dance (Béhague 1979, 98). Chamorro make a distinction with the *jarabe ranchero* as the rural version that is comprised of as many as thirty *son* melodies (2000, 112).
[38] This particular narrative was a part of the postrevolutionary period Mexican music histories written by Campos (1928, 1930) and Galindo (1933).

references could be perceived for their regional uniqueness. The anonymous nature of rural music traditions also reinforced the notion of cultural "essence" and the assumption that these musical products represented "pure" cultural expressions.

The works of nineteenth century piano composers Ernesto Elorduy (1853-1912) and Felipe Villanueva (1862-1893) served as early models for Manuel Ponce - the initial proponent of twentieth century Mexican musical nationalism (Béhague 1979, 101). In many respects Ponce's music echoed the nineteenth century, however his own individual search and writings with regard to national musical style, particularly after the Revolution, encouraged composers to move in a similar direction. Ponce's musical and literary contributions linked the compositional tendencies of nineteenth century composers with postrevolutionary nationalism and provided momentum toward the creation of a national musical style – an achievement attributed to Carlos Chávez. Works by Chávez such as the ballet *Los Cuatro Soles* (1926) and *Sinfonía India* (1935-36) became examples of a nationalist style that integrated European and indigenous musical elements; not only in terms of rhythm, melody and harmony, but also through an aesthetic that placed re-imagined indigenous sounds within the context of the standard European orchestra. In that sense, Chávez created a kind of *musical mestizaje* that assimilated indigenous elements and moved beyond musical quotation and reference to a unique and distinctive style that served as a primary vehicle for the expression of postrevolutionary nationalism.

Nineteenth and early twentieth century musical nationalism embraced a positivist perspective that, as a result of the social and cultural evolution, allowed composers to

"snag" musical artifacts and incorporate them into new works. This approach was common among art music composers in Europe as well as Mexico and signaled the incorporation of rural sounds into compositions for the salon and concert hall. In a trend that was consistent with the emergence of new nations in the nineteenth century and the end of colonial empires, musical production looked to localized forms of expression that expanded the composer's palette and advanced the search for nationalist styles that exhibited an integration of musical influences that were meaningful for urban audiences.

Hispanismo and *Indigenismo*: Ideologies of Identity

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century conceptualizations of *mestizaje* simultaneously valorized and negated indigenous identity and culture. Historically, indigenous peoples were considered inferior and, after centuries of colonial rule, typically occupied the lowest economic and social positions in society. In Mexico, as in other parts of twentieth century Latin America, indigenous identity was used as a political tool that could be invoked or rejected depending upon the perceived needs and desires of the mestizo majority. *Mestizaje* as a conceptual frame masked the contradictory nature of sociopolitical and cultural assimilation and left indigenous groups at the margins of society. Within the context of Mexican capitalist modernity, the Indian was valued as a symbol of the remote past and only referenced when that imagined identity could add cultural capital to the present. As politicians became more adept at nationalist discourse, indigenous culture gained considerable currency as a tool in the re-formulation of national identity especially during the postrevolutionary period of 1920-1940.

Public education was considered the means through which indigenous populations could be "transformed" into valued "social assets" (Buffington and French 2000, 409). The Díaz regime wanted a "disciplined" citizenry that could fulfill Mexico's proclaimed democratic ambitions and capitalist dreams. Although public education advanced during the Porfirian period, any gains were overshadowed by Diaz's thirty-year dictatorship and his disregard for economic, political and social realities. Nonetheless, public education was recognized as a powerful tool in social formation and remained at the forefront of social and political thought as Mexico emerged from revolutionary violence and became the primary vehicle for the indoctrination of cultural nationalism designed by José Vasconcelos between 1921 and 1924.

In 1916, respected Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio published a book entitled *Forjando Patria* (*Forging the Fatherland*). Gamio was a former student of Franz Boas at Columbia University and studied indigenous cultures extensively. He was most well-known for his work in the archaeological excavation of Teotihuacán, an Aztec site located outside of Mexico City. Gamio was a proponent of the Boasian notion of cultural relativism and his writings dealt mainly with indigenous culture.[39] *Indigenismo* as a sociopolitical movement had its beginnings in the work of Manuel Gamio and was extended to the arts through the muralists (Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros) as well as composer Carlos Chávez. As the "father of *indigenismo*" (Bonfil Batalla 2000, 115) Gamio's works were major statements on Mexico's indigenous peoples and the

[39] From the perspective of cultural relativism, cultures could not be arranged in a hierarchy as positivist notions of social evolution suggested. Cultures were examined within their own context and not in comparison with a standardized notion of "value" (Bonfil Batalla 2002, 115).

nationalist overtones expressed in his works located indigenous identity within the conceptual frame of *mestizaje*.

The heterogeneous nature of the Mexican population was seen as an impediment to national unity throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Gamio proposed a kind of "middle ground" that would allow indigenous peoples to co-exist with modern Mexican society (Limón 1998, 44). His proposals required the government to recognize the value of indigenous peoples in the modern state and allow them full participation. "Difference" however, was not part of the nationalist formula and Gamio's suggestions were never seriously put into practice. From the political perspective, indigenous groups were part of Mexico's glorious past and ignored as living sociocultural communities. The discourse of *mestizaje* needed symbols and the expression of indigenous identity was a binding element employed at strategic moments in the service of nationalist discourses designed to hold the country together in the aftermath of the Revolution.

According to Bonfil Batalla, Gamio's position "did not contradict in any way the national plan that the triumphant Revolution had been crystallizing: to incorporate the Indian, that is, to de-Indianize him, to make him lose his cultural and historical uniqueness" (116). The notion of "de-Indianization" was consistent with the processes of assimilation and, as Gamio acknowledged, an inevitable outcome. *Forjando Patria* therefore represented a contradiction in terms of its valorization of indigenous peoples only to come to the conclusion that assimilation was the probable path toward national unity (ibid.). Japan, Germany and France were cited as countries with "true nationality"

because the majority of the population shared "the same ideas, sentiments and expressions of aesthetic concepts of morality, religion and politics" (Gamio 1916, 8). As Gamio noted, Mexico consisted of *pequeñas patrias* ("little fatherlands") and included a large number of indigenous groups with distinct cultures; however, homogeneity "constituted the primary and most solid base for nationalism" and Gamio consistently reinforced that outcome.

As a postrevolutionary ideology, *indigenismo* was integrated into nationalist discourse in order to promote unity. The response by Benito Juárez to European pleas to spare the life of Maximilian von Hapsburg was an important moment in Mexican nationalist discourse and linked indigenous identity with the nation and national sovereignty. *Indigenismo* reappeared as a prominent sociopolitical and cultural movement in the early twentieth century primarily due to the work of Manuel Gamio and the nuanced efforts of José Vasconcelos. *Indigenismo* was a major component in the cultural ideology of the postrevolutionary period and applied through visual and sonic representations as an expression of postrevolutionary nationalism.

A competing ideology known as *hispanismo* was also in circulation during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rooted in Mexico's colonial heritage and obvious ties to Spain, *hispanismo* was a conservative ideology that emphasized Spanish influences in Mexican cultural life. In the postrevolutionary period, *hispanismo* was evoked through a variety of cultural forms and was a constant "voice" for the valorization of Spanish heritage within the conceptual frame of *mestizaje.* In this period, *indigenismo* would be evoked by politicians to varying degrees and had its strongest support during

the administration of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940).[40] While *hispanismo* did not deny the influence of indigenous culture, it conceptually ignored and subsumed it under the umbrella of *mestizaje*. In this way, the degree of emphasis placed on indigenous influence was limited to culture and the arts while politics and social concerns positioned indigenous peoples at the margins.

The conceptualization of Spain as Mexico's "spiritual motherland" is a premise that goes back to the arrival of the Spanish in 1521 and the conquest of indigenous peoples. After three-hundred years Mexico finally won its independence, however cultural ties with Spain remained strong. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Spanish social and intellectual elites believed that Mexico needed "guidance" if it were to become a modern nation. In general, the Spanish supported the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz and, in fact, felt that the Mexican Revolution was unnecessary. The efforts by Spain to serve as Mexico's "guide" were advanced through literature and cultural evocation. Cultural historian Ricardo Pérez Montfort observed that the imperial ideas of *hispanismo* were:

> …based on a principle that featured the existence of a 'grand family' or 'community' or metaphorical 'race' that was distinguished from all other peoples at that moment in the history of the Spanish crown.
>
> …se basa en un principio que plantea al existencia de una 'gran familia' o 'comunidad' o 'raza' trasatlática que distingue a todos los pueblos que en un momento de su historia pertenecieron a la Corona española (1992, 15).

[40] Cárdenas was the most liberal Mexican president in the postrevolutionary period. .His efforts at land reform were seen by the lower classes as fulfillment of the promises made to them when they chose to fight against the government (Aguilar Camín and Meyer 1993 129-158).

This idea of a "familial" relationship between Spain and Mexico had a completely different emphasis in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as Mexico tried to keep pace with European modernity; nonetheless, social and cultural ties provided a historical context for the evocation of a shared sentiment between the two countries. Yet the foundations of *hispanismo* favored Spain as the dominant nation in this relationship and, for that reason, it is an ideological remnant of Spanish colonialism.

Hispanismo as a conservative ideology rested primarily on three aspects: Catholicism, social hierarchy and language (ibid.). The spread of Catholicism through religious conversion was fundamental to the conquest and institutionalized during the colonial period. Spain saw itself as the "spiritual guide" for all of Latin America and continually reinforced that role through religious orders and Catholic organizations. The social structure of the colonial period was also such that the highest positions of power were held by those born in Spain and, secondarily, Mexican *criollos* (those of Spanish blood born in Mexico). After independence, landholding and political elites, along with the Church, were still in control and their positions of power impeded any movement toward democracy. The conservative social structure tended to maintain class positions and did not allow for upward movement. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the mestizo majority slowly gained in power: however, strict social hierarchy remained intact.

While Catholicism controlled the spiritual sphere and social hierarchy the political one, language provided cultural unity (Pérez Montfort 1992, 17). Language allowed for the expression of the "spirit" of Spain and provided the means for the conveyance of

Spanish culture and values. Conceived of as a spiritual "gift" to Mexico, the sharing of language was held in high regard by the Spanish and any non-Castilian elements that crept in were considered to be the equivalent of "spiritual corruption" (ibid.).

In *Hispanistas Mexicanos* (1920), Pedro Serrano identified a number of prominent Mexican *hispanistas*. Among those mentioned was José Vasconcelos, director of the SEP. It is important to realize that Vasconcelos was considered a *hispanista* even though he was instrumental in the promotion of *indigenismo* through his support of the muralist movement immediately following the Revolution. Vasconcelos was an intellectual as well as a writer and, prior to his appointment by Obregón, was Rector of the National University. The fact that he exhibited *hispanista* tendencies reinforces the notion that *indigenismo* was not a call for a return to indigenous roots, but a movement that valorized its contribution to *mestizaje* within the project of postrevolutionary nationalism.

Obregon's strategy was to provide a means for class reconciliation after a decade of violence and, at the same time, establish his own political power. Vasconcelos "proposed to banish discordant bad blood" and "by means of education and the arts, construct a new Mexico" (Crespo 2004, 20). Collaboration by artists and the intellectual elite was necessary for the institution of cultural nationalism and it was Vasconcelos, through the SEP, that provided initial support for the creation of murals in the public buildings of Mexico City as well as Chavez' first work of Indianist character - the ballet *El Fuego Nuevo* (*The New Fire*) in 1921.

Vasconcelos conceived of cultural nationalism as a "regenerative mission" for Mexico and continued to reflect on education, identity and culture as evidenced through his numerous writings and publications. His project also extended beyond the arts and included a national reading and writing campaign, the publication of books, creation of libraries and the building of public schools (ibid., 37). The valorization of indigenous culture must be understood as part of a re-modeling and re-articulation of Mexican national identity which was significant to social reconstruction after the Revolution. A sense of national unity was critical for the reconstruction of the country and the arts were crucial elements to that effort.

Hispanismo ideology also infused the first Mexican music histories published in the late 1920s and early 30s. The works by Rubén Campos (1928, 1930), Miguel Galindo (1933) and Gabriel Saldívar (1934) were organized within a temporal frame for Mexican musical history that stretched from pre-conquest indigenous music to folk and art music. In his dedication to *Nociones de Historia de la Música Mejicana* (Some Thoughts on the History of Mexican Music) Galindo wrote: "This essay is a nationalist effort that intends to know a forgotten aspect of the soul of the Fatherland: musical art, condensed in the most delicate sentiments of the Mexican people" (1933, 7). Galindo also established aesthetic lines of inquiry that linked music with spirituality and the Mexican "soul." The positivist tone of his narrative and conceptualizations of rural groups as authentic representatives of "pure" cultural expressions was similar to Campos and are reflective of the period.

Galindo delivered the keynote address entitled "*La Música Popular y el Sentimiento de la Patria*" ("Popular Music and National Patriotic Sentiment") at a conference of *El Centro Regional Periodistas* (The Regional Writers Center) on April 28, 1923 in the Teatro Hidalgo (Galindo 1923, 1). In his address, Galindo mentioned José Vasconcelos and expressed his general support for the efforts of the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (2-4). Galindo also emphasized the attributes of rural mestizo music as a "well-spring" of Mexican national identity.

Galindo located the characteristics of *mestizaje* in the arts and music saying that "…popular art is the point at which artistic sentiments coincide with the races in which we originated" ["…el arte popular es el punto en que coicinden los sentimientos artísticos de las razas que han dado origin] (Galindo 1923, 6). He went on to say:

> …all art is an evocation of an atavistic or lived past, our art properly ought to have Iberian and indigenous rhythms; Iberian harmonies and melodies, as well as indigenous harmonies and melodies. An art that contains that mixture will be the art that corresponds to our past; a hybrid art like our language and our own blood
>
> …todo arte es la evocación de un pasado atávico o vivido, el arte propiamente nuestro deberá tener ritmos iberos y ritmos indígenas harmonías [sic] y melodías iberas, lo mismo que harmonías y melodías indígenas. Un arte que contenga esa mezcla será el arte que corresponda a nuestro pasado; un arte como nuestro lenguaje y como nuestro propia sangre. (ibid., 6-7).

Galindo however referenced indigenous musical practices in a less favorable light and conceived of popular (mestizo) art as the point of intersection for the European and indigenous cultures:

> I will not say that we ought to conserve completely the art of our ancient ancestors, and return to make the general use of the *teponaztle* and the *chirimía* that regrettably resonated in the blood sacrifices of the altars of Huitzilopochtli. But I have said that popular art is the point of union of the manifestations of the

> beautiful sentiment of the Iberian race and the Aztec race, that which is valued that is to say as our fittingly national art ought to have harmonies and melodies, rhythms and intonations for these two sources contain our genuine and mixed blood…
>
> No diré que debamos conserver íntegro el arte de nuestros lejanos antepasados, y que volvamos a hacer que sea general el use del teponaxtli [sic] y de chirimía que lúgubremente resonaban en los sangrientos sacrificios de los altares de Huitzilopochtli. Pero he dicho que el arte popular es el punto de union de las manifestaciones del sentimiento de las belleza de la raza ibera y de la raza azteca, lo que vale tanto como decir a nuestro arte propiamente nacional debe harmonías y melodías, ritmos y entonaciones de esas dos procedencias tiene nuestra propia y mezclada sangre… (ibid., 8).

The works by Miguel Galindo described here are examples of how rural cultures and their practices were conceptualized in the late 1920s/early 30s. Galindo's narrative valorized rural cultures as repositories of Mexican culture and placed a priority on a musical *mestizaje* that included European and indigenous musical elements.[41] His address from 1923 and book (1933) demonstrated a romantic and idealized view of rural culture that was being offered through the postrevolutionary nationalist frame that valued indigenous influence within a *hispanista* concept of *mestizaje*.

Spanish origins for rural music and dance genres was at the center of another music history entitled *Historia de la Música en México* (1934) by Gabriel Saldívar. This book was also organized in a chronological pre-Cortesian to contemporary format and in it Saldívar attempted to show that the Mexican *son* had its origins in Spain and provided song text analysis as evidence for his conclusions (294-301). This type of analysis was typical of Mexican musicological thought at that time whereby rural folk genres were

[41] The closest examples to Galindo's proposal may have been the works of Carlos Chávez; however Galindo does not mention him by name.

considered only in relation to written Spanish sources and any form of local innovation was disregarded. Although there may have been various kinds of Spanish connections, the conclusions support a colonial viewpoint that was not based on lived performance practices.

The narratives produced by these early twentieth century Mexican music histories celebrated *mestizaje* in a manner consistent with postrevolutionary nationalism. Indigenous rural cultures were valorized for their "purity" and "simplicity" while, in general, mestizo genres were traced to some type of Spanish root. The notion of indigenous identity within the conceptual frame of *mestizaje* was demonstrated in these works and, as ancient forms, indigenous contributions were typically secondary to Spain as the spiritual source for Mexican mestizo musical expressions.

The *Charro, Los Altos* and Postrevolutionary Nationalism

Mexico's central-western region and particularly the state of Jalisco featured prominently in nationalist discourses in the postrevolutionary period. The *charro*, or Mexican cowboy, an important figure in the rural ranch economy beginning in the colonial period was re-invented through media representations and became an important visual and sound symbol of national identity. As the lead character in Mexico's most popular film genre in the 1930s and 40s known as the *comedia ranchera*, the *charro* became the image and voice of *mexicanidad* that was projected on a national and international scale.

Due to the gradual breakup of the hacienda system near the end of the Revolution, the *charro* was no longer an integral part of the ranch economy in the early 1920s. However, even though political and economic circumstances had changed, the skills of the *charro* were transitioned into a national sport.[42] The event known as the *charreada* provided the opportunity for the *charro* to display his riding and roping skills in a competitive atmosphere. It was only after the *charreada* was established in the urban setting in the early 1920s that the practice gained popularity again in rural towns and villages. *Charrería* or horsemanship skills as "a tradition of rural origin was returned to the country in a transformed state, necessarily different in its definition and realization" (Palomar Verea 2000, 83). *Charrería* was being "returned" to the countryside, while the *charro* as symbol of *mexicanidad* was being introduced to a national and international audience through radio, recordings and especially films.

As early as 1921, only one year after the end of the Revolution, the silent film *En la hacienda* was produced. This film marked the emergence of the *charro* character in the Mexican film industry and signaled the start of a tradition in filmmaking that utilized the figure of the *charro* in the production of culture. The *charro*, however, did not just appear in Mexican popular culture after the Revolution. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, he was already an important figure in popular culture through print media and musical theater.[43] The image of the *charro* within Mexican national discourse

[42] The *Asociación Nacional de Charros* was established in 1921, but did not become a national sport until the *Federación Nacional de Charros* in 1933 (Nájera-Ramírez 1994, 6).
[43] Late nineteenth century novels featured the *charro* and contributed to his mythic status in Mexican popular culture (Obscura Gutiérrez 2003, 41). In addition, the *charro* style of dress had been adopted by

also attained a high level of recognition prior to the Revolution through its connection with the *rurales*, a mounted police force created by President Juárez in the 1860s.[44] The historical links of the *charro* to the *rurales* and also banditry added to a macho image that would be exploited in the films from the 1930s and onward.[45]

The *charro* figure reached its highest level of popularity up to that time in the films of Tito Guízar and Jorge Negrete. Folkloric images and expressions dominated the postrevolutionary period and created the conditions for the emergence of the *charro* as the image and voice of *mexicanidad*. The idealized version of the *charro* on the silver screen was a creation of the Mexican media industries beginning in the 1920s; however, the *charro* depicted in films was a re-invention of a historically important figure in Mexican ranch culture. As radio and recordings began to fill the airwaves with newly composed songs reminiscent of Mexico's western region, mariachi and the singing *charro* were re-cast as visual and sound symbols of postrevolutionary nationalism.

The Spanish *conquistadores* imposed ranch culture on indigenous peoples with the introduction of the horse. The Spanish and Mexican-born *criollos* were the only ones privileged to own or ride a horse in the sixteenth century and laws were written to that effect (Nájera-Ramírez 1994, 2). By the late sixteenth century, these laws were no longer enforced due to the expansion of ranching and the needs of the *hacendados*. The demand

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folkloric dancers in popular theater performances, especially for the *jarabe tapatío* - Mexico's national dance following independence from Spain in 1821 (Stevenson 1952, 216-217).

[44] The *rurales* dressed in the manner of the *charro* and were charged with maintaining order in the countryside. Under Porfirio Díaz, the *rurales* were expanded and their image enhanced as "national heroes" (Nájera-Ramírez 1994, 4).

[45] There were elements within the *rurales* who became feared bandits in the countryside. Since they dressed as *charros*, this image must have been a part of popular conceptualization.

was significant and led to the emergence of a skilled workforce known as *vaqueros* or "cowhands" (ibid.). *Vaqueros*, however, as a mestizo group "were disdained as much by the Spanish as the Indians" as they converted themselves into horsemen and sold their services for a fixed salary or share of the livestock sale (Obscura Gutiérrez 2003, 8).

The type of dress worn by the *vaquero* consisted of a shirt and riding pants, short jacket made of deerskin, boots, spurs and a wide *sombrero*. The *hacendado* or (owner of a hacienda) eventually adopted a *charro* style of dress, but with silver adornments and fine embroidery. This particular style was also used in folkloric dance performances in the nineteenth century as the *charro* danced the *jarabe tapatío* with a woman dressed in the *china poblana* costume.[46] In the films of the 1930s, the *hacendado* character wore the *traje de charro*, but it would not be until the early 1940s that this style of dress would become standard in mariachi performance.

The area of *Los Altos de Jalisco*, northeast of Guadalajara, was of considerable interest to *hispanista* intellectuals. *Hispanistas* believed that the population of *Los Altos* represented an enclave of Spanish heritage that had been preserved since colonial times (Orozco 1998). In fact, Jose Vasconcelos himself is quoted as saying that *los alteños* "gene pool" represented "the best racial contingent which our country has. It is of pure Spanish blood" (quoted in Orozco 1998, 13). The *hispanista* search for Mexican national identity ended with the "whiter" version of the *alteño* and this personification of Spanish influence would be reinforced and articulated through the *charro* films of the late 1930s

[46] The *china poblana* costume "consists of a full red flannel shirt, reaching to the ankles, trimmed with designs of sequins…a white, short-sleeved, embroidered blouse; a rebozo folded over the shoulders and crossed in front; many strings of bright beads, a colored ribbon bow on top of the head…" (Toors 1947, 533-535).

and early 40s. The *charro* became linked to *Los Altos* through its ranch economy, geography and, most importantly for *hispanistas*, a lighter-skinned example of Spanish heritage that would be projected through media representations as an expression of *mexicanidad*.

As discussed previously, political conservatives sided with the Church when its power was diminished by Benito Juárez and the liberal federalists in the early 1860s. President Plutarco Calles (1924-1928), the successor to Álvaro Obregón, decided to enforce certain articles in the Constitution of 1917 that echoed the concerns of nineteenth century liberals regarding the activities of the Catholic Church and its priests. As the government moved to regulate religious practices and Church influences in daily life, a crisis ensued. This crisis led to what became known as the *Cristero* Rebellion of 1926-1929. This violent uprising involved thirteen states, but had particularly strong support in the western region and the area of *Los Altos*. As a result of this uprising, the people of *Los Altos* were perceived as stalwarts of the Catholic faith and willing to fight to the death for what they believed in. The rebellion cost nearly 90,000 lives and only ended when a negotiated settlement was made with the government, along with the intervention of the U.S. embassy (Aguilar Camín & Meyer 2001, 86-88).

The *Cristero* Rebellion enhanced the image of the inhabitants of *Los Altos* as strong religious people who were loyal and brave in the face of overwhelming odds. This particular conceptualization along with the perception of "pure" Spanish heritage was transferred to the *charro* film character embodied in singer/actor Jorge Negrete. Negrete's light complexion, strong baritone voice, equestrian abilities and deftness with a

revolver fulfilled the characteristics for the *charro* figure as it was envisioned by film producers.

The melodramatic nature of the *ranchera* films allowed for the expression of moral values that resonated with conservatives and may have represented a rejection of the policies of Lázaro Cárdenas in the late 1930s.[47] The participation of *los alteños* in the *Cristero* Rebellion only added to the mythical status of the area as populated by men of valor. Films applied these qualities to the *charro* character and combined them with a romantic *machismo* to fuel movie storylines. The western region and typically the area of *Los Altos* was the geographic setting where the social structure and Catholicism were backdrops for an idealized version of ranch culture.

Los Altos provided the physical landscape and cultural "traits" for a media induced projection of national identity that matured in the late 1930s and early 40s. As the production of culture became more sophisticated, images and sounds were molded and compressed within the body and voice of the singing *charro*. *Los Altos* and the western region were perceived as possessing all the ingredients for a projection of nationalist ideals valued by the *hispanistas* for the construction of national identity.

The *charro* of the postrevolutionary period was a re-invention of a historical figure with important links to Mexico's past. In media representations, the *charro* was, at times, a nostalgic figure who was idealized as a pre-Revolutionary reminder of a noble past. The *charro* was also re-packaged as a contemporary man that combined honor and

[47] Cárdenas was the most liberal president of the postrevolutionary period and yet predominately conservative films were produced during his presidency (Niblo 1999, 46)

high moral integrity with ingenuity and humor. As elements in the construction and maintenance of postrevolutionary nationalism, the *charro* and the area of *Los Altos* provided "living" references for the promotion of Mexican national identity.

This chapter examined relationships between music, ideology and postrevolutionary nationalism. These elements were based on historical discourses that intersected to create new pathways for the formulation and projection of national identity. Political, social and cultural discourses that began in the nineteenth century became more intense in the years following the Revolution. The political stakes were high and the effort would continue into the 1940s.

Chapter Three: Mariachi, Sound Technology and the Record Industry

An Introduction to Recorded Sound

Late nineteenth century experiments in sound recording led Thomas Alva Edison to one of the most important technological innovations related to music and musical performance. In 1877 Edison invented the phonograph, a record and playback machine which was based on his previous work on the telegraph and the telephone. The phonograph was mechanical (non-electric) with a large horn attached. Sound waves traveled through the horn to a resonating diaphragm and the vibrations were imprinted on to fast-moving paper tape. Edison soon replaced the tape with a metal cylinder wrapped in tin and a needle etched the vibration-induced indentations on to the cylinder. Initially a voice recorder, the phonograph was intended for the business and education markets. As it was perfected, the potential for music recording was recognized and by around 1900, commercial records were released.

Edison, Victor and Columbia were the first major U.S. record labels and their outputs comprised the bulk of early commercial recordings. Opera was quite popular as were art songs and band music; although there was a significant market for folk and popular music.[48] In the early twentieth century, record labels dispatched mobile recording teams to various parts of the world as well as within the U.S. to locate and record important artists in various communities. "Ethnic" recordings became a special

[48] The lists of available recordings revealed an extensive variety of musical styles and ensembles (*Victor Records Catalog, May 1916.* Camden New Jersey: Victor Talking Machine Company).

category among label listings and these included Spanish-language songs recorded in Mexico and the U.S, including San Antonio, Los Angeles and San Francisco.[49] After pressing, these records were typically shipped back to the communities for sale as well as to other selected markets.

In Mexico, U.S. transnational record companies Edison, Victor and Columbia all participated in the recording of *Cuarteto Coculense* in 1908 (Flores y Esclante and Dueñas Herrera 1994, 39-41). These records are believed to be the "first" mariachi recordings and have been marketed as such in a contemporary compilation by Arhoolie Records.[50] Recorded selections and their corresponding catalog numbers are referenced in this chapter under those headings that discuss the respective companies.

With the popularity of the phonograph and the record, musical performance and performance practice entered a new cultural dimension – one that was directly linked to technology and the economic conditions of capitalist modernity. The making of sound recordings required considerable human resources, production space, equipment, marketing and methods of distribution. In response to demand as well as market expansion, U.S. labels produced catalogs that were updated frequently. For example, in 1923 Brunswick Records went from monthly to daily record releases (Laird 2001, 1:5). This strategy may have been an indication of growing demand or an attempt at market manipulation. A business plan that encouraged the consumer to buy a record a day - just

[49] For an overview of various labels see Spottswood, Richard K. 1990. *Ethnic Music on Records:* A *Discography of Ethnic Recordings Produced in the United States, 1893 to 1942.* v. 4. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
[50] "Cuarteto Coculense: The First Mariachi Recordings (1908-1909)." *Mexico's Pioneer Mariachis, vol. 4.* CD 7036. El Cerrito, CA: Arhoolie Folklyric.

as one might buy a newspaper – was a bold move, however it did not last. In any event, the daily release of sound recordings signaled the intensity of the competition between labels and the effort to make new musical products available to the public at quickly.

Musical performance and sound recording technology merged through media processes of production and circulation. In the recording process, repertories were affected and performance practices dramatically altered. Some of the factors that influenced sound production in the early years of recording included the length of time allowed for a musical recording (two to four minutes on early cylinders and single-sided discs), the arranging of musicians around a single recording source (a "horn") and the acoustic "signature" of the physical recording space itself.[51]

Vocalists also had to make adjustments and it seems that certain types of voices were preferred. Opera was popular and while sales had an impact, the vocal production associated with opera worked quite well in the acoustic recording process. It may have been that "trained" voices were easier to record since their attention to projection and diction was an essential element in their craft. Due to the acoustic recording process, it was however difficult to re-produce a "balanced" sound with a diverse instrumental ensemble. In an effort to improve the recording process, Victor went from the acoustic method of recording to a new microphone-based electrical system developed by Western Electric in 1925.

The circulation of recordings also had an effect on the standardization of performance practices and the popularity of the repertory. As certain selections became

[51] For a discussion of sound recording see Altman (1992)and Elisabeth and Belton (1985)

well-known, their status within the repertory was elevated. Through repetition and reproduction, certain aspects of the repertory became part of an on-going dialogue between the past and what was currently popular. In this way, repertories became fixed to the extent that new works were always measured against the past. And, with the contribution of radio and regularly printed *cancioneros*, repertories were being established and certain selections were becoming familiar to the public.[52]

The ability to produce phonographs as well as records gave Edison, Victor and Brunswick control over the sound product as well as the means through which it was engaged by the consumer. By producing the record and the mechanical means for its realization, companies had considerable leverage over format, sound reproduction and marketing. Edison, for example, claimed that cylinder recordings produced a sound that was superior to discs and was therefore reluctant to adopt the disc format.[53] Edison also made cylinders longer than any of the other labels. When the company finally switched to disc recordings in 1912 with the "Edison Diamond Disc," it was not compatible with any phonograph other than Edison (Spottswood 1990, 1:xxxii). By virtue of their positions as both record producers and sellers of phonographs, Edison, Victor and Brunswick were able to offer the market certain types of records that fit their particular strengths in terms of artist repertory and in the quality of their phonograph sound. By the late 1920s, the number of companies that produced both phonographs and records had

[52] See the discussion of *Cancionero Picot* in Chapter 4 in relation to radio.
[53] The disc was developed by Emile Berliner in the late 1890s (Sherman 1992, 12).

thinned considerably. This may have been the result of competition by some of the smaller labels, but more likely was due to competition from the emerging radio industry.

Records and sound recordings impacted radio in a very distinct ways. Broadcast commercial radio was conceived around the concept of the commodity of "time" with music playing a major role in the radio show format as an "organizer" of sound with social implications. Certain musical styles became identified with particular consumer products through corporate sponsors and the radio show. Once the initial reluctance of record companies to allow their artists to appear on commercial radio subsided, the two industries entered into a close relationship linked by their mutual needs for advertising artists and musical products.[54] Record companies provided the sounds for transmission and radio conceptually re-packaged them within the context of the broadcast format.

Up until the introduction of the record, music listening had been primarily a collective, ephemeral experience. Whether it was opera, band music or popular song, performances were typically heard in a large social space – the concert hall, salon, musical theater or outdoor setting. The phonograph however, allowed for an individualized listening experience that could also be shared in the home and provided the option of choosing a particular musical selection for purchase. In a concert situation, the listener did not decide the repertory or the order of the program - the choice was whether to attend or not attend. The purchase of a recording signaled a different

[54] Initially, both Brunswick and Victor were reluctant to let their top artists appear on radio. This position stemmed from their concern that radio was cutting in to the phonograph business (Laird 2001, 26).

relationship with music – a conceptual sense of "ownership" that allowed the consumer to design the listening experience according to specific desires and preferences.

The shifting of the listening experience from a collective to an individual one was symptomatic of the processes of modernity that redefined and reinvented the self and society (Flores 2002, 2). As records commodified sound, musical performance was redefined through the recording as a filter between the listener and the performance itself. Recordings also introduced the potential for multiple hearings of a musical performance and this was reflected in the "ownership" concept described above. Repetition not only allowed the listener to become more familiar with a particular musical selection, but also effectively standardized various repertories and practices for live performance through the circulation of recorded examples.

Professional musicians were expected to be able to reproduce musical performances based on the popularity of a singer or recording. The performance tradition of the urban mariachi as a kind of "human jukebox" grew out of this social agreement between the musicians and their customers that requests would be honored, and even if the selection was not known, a valiant effort would be made to reproduce a favorite tune by a favorite performer.

Music is, to borrow a concept from Raymond Williams, is a "reproducible form" (1981). In general, music that is performed by a person or an ensemble can be performed again by others. This type of reproduction does not imply that the performance of the same work is a "copy." The sounds and interpretations of different

performers will always produce alternative inflections within the music and these will be granted various levels of authenticity when measured against the "original."

In 1901, the process for making copies of cylinders was a tedious one and it was normal for performances to be repeated in order to create a sufficient number of copies for distribution. Molds were made of the original cylinder and in this way, multiple copies could be produced. The notion of "replication" as advanced by Williams (ibid.) would be appropriate when considering these processes since there appear to have been levels of variance in the reproduction process. Discs, however, were much more easily reproduced in mass quantities than cylinders. The nature of their replication therefore made differences between discs imperceptible. The disc format then, not only allowed the record companies to make vast numbers of copies quickly, but since it effectively supplanted the cylinder, there would be no diversion in terms of format. Thus, the potential for expanding the market with a reliably homogenous product greatly increased.

In the late nineteenth century, commercial records and the recording process affected the way music was perceived and experienced. The phonograph reproduced musical performances within the confines of the home in a way that had been unimaginable up to that point. The music listening experience was also changed as audiences had the opportunity to choose their own musical selections and create their own sound libraries. In addition, performances practices and repertories were influenced by the contexts and conditions associated with the recording process and the economic realities for the companies involved – the labels wanted the purchase of records to become a part of daily life. In that sense, the market-driven efforts of record companies

between 1890 and 1920 to record music (especially from non-Western cultures) helped give researchers the technological tools needed for their work and laid the methodological foundations for comparative musicology and ethnomusicology.

Recordings and Ethnomusicology

The late nineteenth century was a period of considerable activity in the collection and preservation of material and expressive culture. The forces of modernity weighed heavily particularly upon anthropologists and folklorists in particular as they realized that indigenous cultures could soon be lost or radically changed by contact with industrialized nations. Psychologists and acousticians were also interested in studying non-Western indigenous cultures believing that those cultures mirrored a pre-modern form of human existence and that the principles of biological evolution could be applied to human societies.[55] In Berlin, Carl Stumpf (1841-1936) and Erich von Hornbostel (1877-1935) analyzed music from the Berlin *Phonogrammarchiv*, a collection of recordings made by German ethnologists of indigenous cultures from various parts of the world (Myers 1992, 4). Hornbostel and Stumpf were part of what became known as the Berlin School and their work focused particularly on tuning systems, musical instruments and melodic analysis. The search for musical "traits" undertaken by the Berlin School was an extension of the evolutionary view of culture and applied to the study of musical origins. The field known as "comparative musicology" grew out of this perspective and the phonograph and sound recordings were essential to the research methodology.

[55] See the discussion on positivism and social physics in Chapter 1.

Early twentieth century researchers relied on field recordings as the basis for transcription and analysis. The concept of fieldwork as a defining element in ethnomusicology was made possible by the phonograph along with engaging performers within their own communities. The first field recordings of the Passamaquoddy Indians by ethnologist Jesse Walter Fewkes in 1890 were made with an Edison cylinder phonograph (Myers 1992, 4). This practice of recording and observation followed by analysis in the laboratory reflected a research style that aspired to be "scientific." But, it also revealed the colonialist nature of ethnomusicology's conceptual beginnings and the extent to which it was dependent upon recording technology as an essential tool in research.

The history of ethnomusicology is linked to recording technology not only through the late nineteenth/early twentieth century work of collectors and researchers, but through the commercial labels themselves. This is partly because the goals of recording, beyond that of preservation, were less clear at that time. Historical sound recordings in contemporary research are granted a high degree of authenticity due to their status as sound documents. Kay Kaufman Shelemay (1991) noted that researchers and commercial representatives shared similarities in terms of the equipment used for recording as well as the methods for locating potential subjects. In addition, it was not out of the question for ethnomusicologists to collaborate with commercial labels on certain recording projects (280-281). Near the end of the twentieth century, this type of collaboration caused ethnomusicologists considerable anxiety as concern regarding the

rights of musical ownership for indigenous cultures collided with the economic realities of commercial recording. [56]

The Nature of Sound Recording

Records and the recording process played a significant role in the development of ethnomusicology as a scholarly field. In current research, historical recordings among *aficionados* as well as academics are typically granted a higher level of significance than more recent examples. The reasons for this are varied, but usually tied to particular performers, revered ensembles, genres, repertories, or contexts of performance. Largely by virtue of their relative chronological positions, recordings tend to be treated by music historians as sources that possess a level of authenticity that others do not, especially when the record displays innovation or a rare quality that may be significant to understanding a particular historical construct.

In "The Material Heterogeneity of Recorded Sound" (1992), Rick Altman notes:

> …sound records never convey exactly the same information that a given auditor would experience. Far from arresting and innocently capturing a particular narrative, the recording process simply extends and complicates that narrative. Just as upholstery of a particular soundscape has an impact on the sound narrative, so the way in which sound is collected and entered into memory becomes part and parcel of the overall sound phenomenon (24).

A recording however, is not an unbiased reproduction of a musical event; types of equipment, placement of the recording source (horn, microphone), the shape of the room, position of the musicians, etc. all influence the sound product. Sound recording

[56] For a discussion of this topic see Steven Feld's "A Sweet Lullaby for World Music" (2000) in *Public Culture* 12 (1).

therefore “always carries some record of the recording process superimposed on the sound event itself” (ibid., 26). Sound recordings project a particular *version* of the event and should also be considered as representations filtered through the recording process. Old recordings are generally the only access to the sounds of the past and therefore acquire a higher degree of authenticity and status when compared to others; nevertheless these are the results of technical processes, and are only “partial narratives” of musical performances (ibid., 27). Old recordings by artists of stature or historical importance are generally perceived as containing some kind of musical truth related to style, performance practice or repertory. Following Altman, the analysis of historical recordings must retain a critical sense of their nature as sound clips from a tradition at a particular moment in time and that clip is overlaid with a complex set of circumstances related to economic, technological, political and cultural conditions that influenced the construction of repertories and performance practices.

The fragmented nature of the musical recording as expressed by Altman leads to a conceptualization of musical performance on historical recordings as being the result of a break between local traditions and forces of modernity. As sound sources moved away from their normal social and cultural attachments, they reached a level of disengaged autonomy that allowed for the transmission of culture without experiencing its actual presence. Musical performance became an exercise in the cultural production of sounds that were separated from their local influences and relied upon new social and cultural contexts for their continued practice.

The concept of *schizophonia* discussed by Steven Feld in *Music Grooves* (1994) also shares this idea of the need to critically analyze the recording process itself. In the chapter titled "From Schizophonia to Schismogenesis: On the Discourses and Commodification Practices of 'World Music' and 'World Beat,'" Feld outlines *schizophonia* (a term coined by composer Murray Shafer) as "the split between an original sound and its electroacoustical transmission or reproduction" (258). The phonograph and recording process represented the beginning of an "increased separation of sounds from sources" (ibid.). Sound recording technology therefore formed a divide between musical sounds that were created or performed in a specific cultural context and then reproduced in ways that would have little meaning for the local communities from which they came.

The development of the modern mariachi bears a distinct resemblance to this notion of *schizophonia* and typifies the types of changes that result when a rural tradition is moved into an urban context. Although a "separation of sounds from sources" pointed to technology as the culprit in the "split," it was not the only element that brought about change. Mariachis, along with large segments of the population from the western region, moved to Mexico City in the 1920s. Out of this movement a new tradition emerged that was based on the needs of the urban context. Eventually the rural connections were weakened and as mariachi moved into the realm of popular music, the media production of culture initiated a crucial transformation. One of the most important examples of the "split" is the fact that mariachi became an ensemble distinct from its music and dance roots. Once mariachi became an entity within the Mexican popular music industry, its

connections with certain aspects of its rural repertory were de-emphasized.[57] In addition, the dislocation from indigenous influences also contributed to the "break" as various genres were not included in the modern mariachi repertory.[58] The term *schizophonia* described significant developments in relation to the transformation of mariachi, however the causes for the "split" involved more than technology. Although the media industries participated in the transformation of the mariachi in the 1940s, politics and socioeconomic conditions of the postrevolutionary period had set the stage for the process that began a decade earlier.

U.S. Transnational Record Companies

The major U.S. record companies at the beginning of the twentieth century were Edison, Victor and Columbia followed by Brunswick. While Edison, Victor and Brunswick made phonographs as well as records, Columbia, at that time, was focused solely on recording. From 1902 to 1910, all of these companies were active in Mexico along with smaller labels Zonophone and Odeón (Flores y Escalante and Dueñas 2005, 63). The record companies left Mexico during the Revolution taking their equipment with them and returned in 1921 after a decade-long absence (Dueñas 1990, 218). Already positioned in Mexico by the 1920s, U.S. recording companies were involved with commercial radio from the beginning as well as in the production of sound films beginning in 1931. This allowed the U.S. companies to sell technology and equipment to

[57] For a discussion of the rural mariachi repertory see Chamorro (2000); Jáuregui (1990) and Ochoa Serrano (1992).
[58] This is particularly true for the *jarabe* – a genre that is typically not a part of a modern mariachi's repertory, except for *Jarabe Tapatío*. Other rural genres included the *gaita* and *jota* (Chamorro 2000, 101-114)

the rapidly expanding radio and film industries at a time when the U.S. was undergoing the Great Depression (1929-39).

The Mexican record industry continued to be in the hands of the U.S. transnational companies until 1936 when the first Mexican-owned record company, Discos Peerless, was founded. In the 1940s, two other Mexican-owned companies, Musart and Orfeón entered the market. Musart was created in 1947 as a result of a split in the ownership of Discos Peerless. Orfeón was founded in 1957 by Rogerio Azcárraga Madero, nephew of Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta, media magnate and head of RCA Victor Mexicana (Zolov 1999, 20).

Edison, the first company to market the phonograph, began portable recording operations in Mexico City in 1905 (Flores y Escalante and Dueñas Herrera 1994, 39). The two minute cylinders of *Cuarteto Coculense* recorded by Edison are the earliest known mariachi recordings.[59] In an effort to increase time capacity, Edison introduced the Amberol cylinder in 1908, however because of its fragile nature it was replaced by the sturdier "Blue Amberol" cylinder in 1912 (Spottswood 1990, xxxii). Edison released recordings by *Cuarteto Coculense* recordings in the Blue Amberol format and continued

[59] Edison numbers: 20009 *El limoncito* (*The Tiny Lemon*); 20010 *El carretero* (*The Cart Driver*); 20011 *Petrita*; 20048 *La guacamaya*; 20049 *La indita* (*The Indian Woman);* 20063 *El ausente* (*The Absent One*) 20064 *Las abajeñas* (*The Lowland Women*); 20080 *Las olas de la laguna* (*The Waves of the Lagoon*) 20081 *El chivo* (*The Goat*) 20092 (*El tecolote* (*The Owl*); 20184 (*El frijolito* ((*The Little Bean Plant*); 20199 *Arenita de oro* (*Golden Sand*); 20218 *El cuervo* (*The Raven*)); 20220 *La malagueña* (*The Lady from Málaga*; 20234 *La chaparrita abajeña* (*Little Lowland Woman*); 20247 *El becerrero* (*The Cattle Herder*); 20259 *El zihualteco* (*The One From Zihualteco*); 20281 *El tejón* (*The Badger*); 20307 *Las campanitas* (*The Bells*); 20328 *El arriero* (*The Muleteer*); 20354 *El periquito* (*The Parakeet*) (Flores y Esclante and Dueñas Herrera 1994, 40). Song title translations: "Cuarteto Coculense: The First Mariachi Recordings (1908-1909)." *Mexico's Pioneer Mariachis, v. 4*. CD 7036. El Cerrito CA: Arhoolie Folklyric.

to sell cylinders until 1929 (Spottswood 1990, 1:xxxii).[60] Thomas Edison's reluctance to switch over to disc recording was based on his belief that the disc sound was inferior to the cylinder and, while this may have been true, Edison's company suffered and, as a result, was out of business by 1929 (ibid.).

Victor

The Victor Talking Machine Company was formed in 1901 out of Emile Berliner's National Gramophone Company and Consolidated Talking Machine Company owned by Eldridge Johnson (Sherman 1992 22-26). Berliner invented the flat disc record in 1888 and Johnson, a previous employee of Berliner's, produced phonographs to play them. Due to Berliner's commitment to disc recording, Victor was the only one of the three early record companies that did not record on cylinders (Spottswood 1990, 1:xxx). Victor's innovation, however, in terms of format did not lead the industry. Victor produced single-side discs until 1908 when Columbia introduced the double-side 78 rpm disc (Brooks1999, 12). Victor used the double-sided format until Columbia introduced the 33 1/3 rpm microgroove long-playing disc (LP) in 1948. Victor responded with the 45rpm in 1949, but by 1950 was also making the 33 1/3 LP (Sherman, 1992, 78). The LP format would remain the standard for nearly twenty years until the introduction of the audio cassette in the late 1960s.

[60]Edison Amberol numbers: 6032 *El periquito* (*The Parakeet*); 6039 *El carretero* (*The Cart Driver*); 6045 *El limoncito* (*The Tiny Lemon*); 6070 *Las campanitas* (*The Bells*); 6081 *La guacamaya*; 6094 *El arriero* (*The Muleteer*) (Flores y Escalante and Dueñas Herrera 1994, 40).

Beginning in 1908, Victor issued an "ethnic" series that ran until 1929 when the company merged with RCA.[61] Mobile recording teams canvassed the world for new sound sources and Victor was active in this enterprise as well. Prior to the construction of production facilities outside the U.S., the wax plates of these original recordings were shipped back to Camden, New Jersey for processing and pressing (Sherman 1992, 8). Once completed, records "were then exported; sometimes only to the country of origin, sometimes to a number of different countries, and on still other occasions, released for sale in the United States (ibid.).

Records were targeted for sale to specific ethnic groups and Victor formed subsidiary labels for their release.[62] In 1933, Victor started the Bluebird label which included a variety of ethnic musics (Italian, Hungarian, Polish, etc.) and also a Mexican series that ran from 1936-1942 (Spottswood 1990, 1:xxxiii). In addition to the Bluebird catalog, Victor released Spanish-language songs under its own name. A recording by the duo of Jorge Negrete and Ramón Armengod made in New York City in 1937 is an example of such a release.[63] Negrete would ultimately rise to fame as a film star and Armengod, who continued to make recordings on the Decca label from 1937-1942, also starred in a number of films. The writing was on the wall: to no small degree, success in

[61] RCA stands for Radio Corporation of America and was a created in the years following World War I "to monopolize radio communications and force British Marconi Corporation out of the United States (Hayes 2000, 27).
[62] For a discussion of activities and impact of major record labels in south Texas see Peña (1985).
[63] The two selections recorded by the Armengod y Negrete Duo were: *Besos* (*Kisses*), a *bolero* by Luis Arcaraz and *Por fin cuando* (*If At Last*), a *canción* by Joaquin Pardavé. These selections were recorded on February 10, 1937 in New York City. Victor Record catalog number: Vi 32957, (Spottswood 1990, 4:1646).

the recording industry would lead to visibility. And in the era of sound film, there was no greater medium for a carefully packaged visibility than the silver screen.

Victor's "Red Seal" was its most prestigious line and contained many of the most famous vocalists and musicians from the early twentieth century art music tradition. Italian tenor Enrico Caruso (1873-1921) was by far Victor's most important artist and his recordings were legendary. The timbre of his voice was well-suited to the acoustic recording process and he consistently produced quality recordings (Sherman 1992, 82)

Another "Red Seal" artist had considerable influence on the development of the singing *charro* - Tito Schipa. Schipa was born in Italy in 1889, sang with the Metropolitan Opera and had numerous releases on Victor "Red Seal".[64] In addition, he also taught a number of important singers including the first singing *charro* film star Tito Guízar. Guízar arrived in New York City in 1929 with the help of Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta, owner of Radio XEW. While in New York Guízar sang on radio, made recordings for Victor and also studied with Schipa. In a 1999 interview, Guízar talked briefly about his time with Schipa:

> *Your real name is Federico Arturo. From where did you get Tito?*
>
> From my teacher Schipa. My mother called me Quico, but I never liked it. When I met the maestro I liked his name and decided to adopt it. I studied eight years with him beginning in 1932; he taught me Italian almost to perfection. He retired in 1956. His last student was the tenor Luciano Pavarotti, great ambassador of the tremendous school that the maestro left behind.

[64] A total of sixteen selections listed in the 1925 Victor catalog, six are in Spanish. Discs with the same number (implying a double-side disc) are no. 929: *A la orilla de un palmar* (*Beside the Palms*) by Ponce and *Quiéreme mucho* (*Love Me Deeply*) by Roig; no. 1030: *Mi viejo amor* (*My Old Love*) by Oteo and *Rosalinda* by Sanchez de Fuentes. Selections with a single catalog number are: no. 827: *Princesita* (*Little Princess*) by Palomero-Padilla; no.6423 *Canción Andaluza* (*Andalusian Song*) by Palacios. Source: Schipa, Tito, Tenor. "S" in Red Seal section. Victor Records Catalog 1925.

> "Su nombre verdadero es Federico Arturo. ¿De dónde sacó Tito?"
>
> De mi maestro Schippa[sp]. Mi madre me decía Quico, que nunca me gustó. Cuando encontré a mi maestro me agradó su nombre y decide adoptarlo. Estudié ocho años con él a partir de 1932; me enseñó el idioma italiano casi a la perfección. Se retiró en 1956. Su ultimo discípulo fue el tenor Luciano Pavarotti, gran divulgador de la tremenda escuela que dejó el maestro (Carmena y Salazar 2000, 71).

The connection between Tito Guízar and Schipa illustrates the influence that the art music tradition had in terms of vocal performance and in the shaping of the *charro* voice as embodied by Guízar. His operatic tenor is an example of the convergence of musical styles within the concept of the singing *charro* that was being promoted by the media industries.

Columbia

Columbia was originally a marketing agent for North American Phonograph Company. North American held the rights to Edison's phonograph and Columbia acted as their "local agent for the territory covering Delaware, Maryland and the District of Columbia (Brooks 1999, 1). Columbia focused on providing pre-recorded music cylinders to phonograph salesmen and operators of coin-slot music machines. The company's recording activities were extensive at the time as the potential for music recordings was recognized (ibid., 2). Columbia produced phonographs, cylinders and discs – a production line that was unique within the industry. In 1902, Edison produced 4 million cylinders, while Victor produced 1.7 million discs (ibid., 6). By 1903, Columbia was making 20,000 cylinders and 10,000 discs per day (ibid., 7).

Columbia's ethnic recordings started in the 1890s and in the early 1900s "the company began traveling to Central and South America and to the Far East, both to make records and to establish wholesale and retail outlets for its records and machines" (Spottswood 1990, 4:xxviii). Columbia reportedly had an active "studio" in Mexico City in 1904 (Brooks 1999, 421), but little is known about this "studio" and more than likely it was a portable unit and the means for recording *Cuarteto Coculense* in 1908. [65]

In 1908, an "ethnic" series of records aimed at the U.S. domestic market was initiated. A separate catalog was published for Spanish language discs and "in 1912 this totalled [*sic*] 160 pages, and in 1914, 226 pages" (Brooks 1999, 30). Columbia's "ethnic" recording ventures in Spanish-speaking market signified its positioning within the industry. In 1934, Columbia was acquired by the American Record Corporation (ARC) – a company that at that time owned Brunswick and Vocalion, labels that were already invested in the Spanish language market (Spottswood 1990, xxix).

In 1927, the Columbia name was used for a radio network that was still in the planning stages. This network would become known as the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) and was comprised of fourteen stations in the eastern and Midwestern U.S (Brooks 1999, 20). This action was more than likely in response to Victor's affiliation with the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). In 1939, Columbia Records was acquired by CBS and all other American Record Corporation labels except for Columbia and Vocalion were discontinued.

[65] Brooks (1999) does not state whether or not this was a portable recording unit, however that is most likely. The citation given by Brooks for an operational 'Mexico City studio" is taken from the *Columbia Record*, April 1904. This conflicts with the year of 1905 identified by Flores y Escalante and Dueñas Herrera (1994, 39) as the start of recording activities in Mexico City.

In addition to the recordings of *Cuarteto Coculense,* Columbia also recorded Mariachi Coculense de Cirilo Marmolejo while they were in Chicago performing at the 1933 World's Fair. During their stay, Columbia recorded the following as listed in *Ethnic Music on Records* (1990) by Robert Spottswood, page 2065:

Co 4967-X: *Ay, Le Diré* (*Oh, I'll tell her*) - *son abajeño*
La Canelera (*The Cinnamon Vendor*) - *canción*

Co 4968-X: *México Lucido* (*Magnificent Mexico*) - *son abajeño*
La Pulquera (*The Pulque Vendor*) - *canción*

Co 4969-X: *Las Gaviotas* (*The Seagulls*) - *canción*
Blanca Palomita (Ando en Busca) (*Little White Dove*) (*I am Searching*) - *canción*

The performances by Mariachi Coculense at the World's Fair were supported by the Mexican government and indicated the ensemble's significant stature. At this time, Mariachi Coculense was the premier mariachi in Mexico City and the recordings by Columbia give a sense of what was being performed at that particular time. Radio and recordings were still the main media sources for mariachi in 1933. Although Mariachi Coculense appeared briefly in *Santa* (1931), Mexico's first sound film, the film genre of the *comedia ranchera* genre was still three years away.

One other early performer of Mexican popular music that recorded on Columbia was the composer, singer and guitarist, Guty Cárdenas (1905-1932). Cárdenas, whose full name is Augusto Alejandro Cárdenas Pinelo, was associated with the musical movement known as *trova yucateca* and was a major force in the popularization of regional songs from the Yucatán. Between 1928 and 1931, Cárdenas recorded a number of his own compositions as well as those by other artists. Most of his recordings were on

Columbia and included songs such as *Ojos Tristes* (*Sad Eyes*) and *Flor* (*Flower*) (Spottswood 1990, 4:1739, 1999, 2000, 2043). Cárdenas *trova yucateca* song style influenced a number of Mexican popular song composers including Agustín Lara and Lorenzo Barcelata.

Columbia Records was involved in the recording industry as a phonograph manufacturer, record label and radio network. Columbia's activities in all these areas branded it a forward-looking company and one that typically did not wait to react to what others might be doing. To cite just one fruit of that progressive philosophy, it introduced the double-sided 78rpm record as well as the 33 1/3 LP – an industry standard for close to thirty years. In the case of mariachi, Columbia was important because it was part of the first mariachi recordings of 1908-1909, along with the fact that it took the opportunity to record Mariachi Coculense at the World's Fair in 1933. These recordings in particular (1908/09 and 1933) grant Columbia special status among the early record companies as a producer of mariachi sound recordings

Brunswick

Brunswick Records was established more than two decades after Edison, Victor and Columbia. Nevertheless, they were a large company and an important producer of phonographs and recordings. The Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company was founded in 1845 "as a manufacturer of a wide variety of products including furniture, piano cases, carriages and bowling balls" (Laird 2001, 1). In 1916, after a downturn in the piano market, Brunswick entered the recording business with the Pathé Phonograph Company

of France. After the partnership ended in 1918, Brunswick started making its own records. The Vocalion label was purchased from the Aeolian Co., a maker of piano rolls in 1924. Vocalion had been recording since 1917 and active in the Spanish language market since 1923.

Brunswick and Victor were especially cautious about radio in the early 1920s since it was not evident whether radio would help or hurt the recording business. Brunswick, like Victor, was a maker of phonographs (large and small) and felt especially vulnerable. In 1923, Brunswick and Victor were not cooperating with radio. We can garner a sense of their attitude from an article titled: "Will the Great Artists Continue?" that was published in 1923 and based on the views of Brunswick executives. The article stated they were:

> …emphatic in their assertion to prohibit their exclusive stars from performing for the radio. That is why no important Victor artist has been able to broadcast personally in the past months, and why only one or two of the Brunswick artists have been heard by the radio audience…When you hear a Brunswick exclusive artist broadcasting in person you may be sure that the company has investigated the program, the object of its transmission, and the quality of the transmitter (quoted n Laird 2001, 1:26)

The article continued:

> We have felt radio required further development and improvement before a worthy transmission of an artist's work could be an entirely dependable procedure… Furthermore, we have not yet decided that unrestricted appearances of our artists in that respect might, in some measure, retard the demand for their records (ibid.).

The first broadcast of Brunswick artists over the RCA radio network was on December 15, 1924. Victor soon followed with its artists performing on January 1, 1925. The mistrust with which these large record companies approached radio indicated that

broadcast technology was not embraced immediately or believed to be advantageous for the record industry. Although the relationship between the two industries would become increasingly close, in the early 1920s, sound recording and broadcast technologies were still new and therefore had no previous history upon which to make any sort of economic projection.

The ethnic series for Brunswick and Vocalion recorded frequently in Los Angeles and Chicago. In 1927, however the series became almost exclusively Mexican and Mexican American with recording trips to El Paso and San Antonio. U.S. recorded ensembles ranged from solo voice with guitar to *orquesta*. Brunswick brought a mobile recording unit to Mexico City in 1928 and recorded the notable singer Juan Arvisu, the Mexico City Police Band and an *orquesta típica* playing *Jarabe Tapatío* (Laird 2001, 3:1378-1380). A highlight of the repertory from the Police Band recordings of May 1928 included: *Aires Andaluces* (*Andalusian Airs*), *Aires Nacionales* (*National Aires*), two marches for President Obregón (one entitled *Álvaro Obregón* and the other *El Presidente*) along with *Jarabe Tapatío*, and the Mexican national anthem (ibid., 1379).

In 1931, Brunswick, Vocalion and another label that had been recently acquired in 1930, Melotone, became part of the American Record Corporation [66] For nearly a decade, Brunswick was a major label among the U.S. transnational record companies and a major manufacturer of phonographs. As a record producer for the Spanish-speaking

[66] American Record Corporation was also a media company and was instrumental in promoting singing cowboy star Gene Autry (Stanfield 2002, 83).

market, Brunswick's output was considerable at the time, especially with regard to its mobile recording activities in Texas and California.

OKeh/Odeon

OKeh was a smaller label compared to those previously discussed; however it was responsible for a large number of recordings made in Texas and California along with the New York recordings of *Los Trovadores Tamaulipecos* made in 1928. *Los Trovadores* was comprised of Lorenzo Barcelata, Ernesto Cortázar, José Agustín Ramírez and Carlos Peña. Barcelata and Cortázar would go on to fame as composers, performers and actors in Mexican films of the 1930s and 40s. Barcelata composed one of the most famous songs in Mexican popular music, *María Elena* (1934). Cortázar worked in various facets of the film industry including as a writer, composer and actor, however he would be remembered most for his work as a lyricist for composer Manuel Esperón and modern mariachi classics such as *¡Así se quiere en Jalisco!* and *¡Esos altos de Jalisco!* performed by Jorge Negrete.[67]

OKeh started out in 1919 as the label for phonograph parts manufacturer Otto Heineman. Heineman started his business in 1877 and became involved in the phonograph industry in 1902. By 1915, the company was incorporated as the Otto Heineman Phonograph Supply and made motors and parts for phonograph manufacturers (Laird and Rust 2004, 2). Records started being produced in 1918 and in 1919 the name

[67] Both of these *canciónes rancheras* were recorded on RCA Victor. *¡Esos altos de Jalisco!* was recorded January 11, 1943 (de Laviada 1994, 69). *¡Así se quiere en Jalisco!* , the title song from the film by the same name was also recorded in 1943 (ibid., 64).

"OKeh" was given to the recording side of the business.[68] In 1919, Heineman re-organized the company under the name General Phonograph Corporation and in 1921 American Odeon (a subsidiary) released opera, classical and popular music. OKeh and Odeon comprised the record division. Between 1922 and 1929, Odeon was only used for "ethnic" and classical recordings (ibid., 3).

In 1926, Okeh became a subsidiary of Columbia. As a result of the Depression, Odeon was discontinued in 1931 while the OKeh label remained until 1933. OKeh was a major producer in the Spanish-speaking market at the time with recordings made in San Antonio (1928-1930) and Los Angeles (1928-1931).[69] The San Antonio recordings were primarily of duos, trios, and a few *orquestas* while the Los Angeles sessions included mainly vocal duets with *orquesta* and, in two instances, with mariachi (ibid., 562-568). *Mariachi Abajeño* made a record on Jan 16, 1929 and *Mariachi González* accompanied *Dueto Acosta* (Elena Ramírez y David Valles) on May 25, 1929.[70]

The recordings by *Los Trovadores Tamaulipecos* were made in New York City in three sessions: June 1st, 5th and 6th, 1928. All of these recordings included *Mariachi Edgardo Acosta*. In the listings of the New York sessions provided by Laird and Rust (2004), an *Orquesta Acosta* also appeared as a back-up group (481). It is possible that

[68] A trade magazine "Talking Machine World" from 1919 stated that the name "OKeh" was "derived from the original Indian spelling of the term colloquially known as 'O.K.' standing for 'all right'" (quoted in Laird and Rust 2004, 2). This was obviously a dubious statement, but the quote is worth noting here for its historical perspective.

[69] Texas sessions in San Antonio and Dallas also included recordings of groups for the Anglo market. In San Antonio a sampling of these groups included Sunny Clapp and his Band O' Sunshine, Log Cabin Fiddlers and Troy Floyd and his Shadowland Orchestra. In Dallas, the list included The Texas Night Hawks, The Three Virginians and Durward Cline and his Orchestra (Laird and Rust 2004, 566-567).

[70] OKeh 16388: Mariachi Abajeño, *Levántate, amigo mio* (*Get Up, My Friend*); OKeh 16374: Mariachi González, *Ando borracho* (*Walking Drunk*) and *Los arrieros* (*The Muleteers*).

Mariachi Edgardo Acosta was comprised of musicians from the *orquesta* (or vice-versa) for the purpose of accompanying *Los Trovadores*. Selections for these recordings included *Presumida* (*Conceited*), *Mariquita* (*Little Mary*) and religious-inspired songs *Virgencita* (*Little Virgin*) and *Guadalupana* (*Follower of Our Lady of Guadalupe*). Flores y Escalante and Dueñas Herrera note that *Los Trovadores* also recorded for Columbia in New York between 1928 and 1930 and on Victor in Mexico City in 1931 (1994, 43-44). The repertory for these sessions consisted of *sones* and *huapangos*.[71]

Discos Peerless

In 1927, Eduardo C. Baptista founded *La Compañía Nacional de Discos* in Mexico City. The first labels of this company were *Huici*, *Nacional*, *Olympia, Artex* and *Flexo* (Dueñas 1990, 218). The sound quality was apparently poor and copies for various titles only numbered in the hundreds. Baptista had a recording studio in the *Teatro Politeama* and it was there that he recorded vocalists from radio, musical theater and film. In 1929, Baptista founded Discos Peerless with Gustavo Klinckwort and discontinued the initial five labels of *La Compañía Nacional de Discos*.[72] Peerless recorded some of the most famous performers at that time including Agustín Lara, Tomás Morato, Luis Arcaraz, Gonzalo Curiel, *Las Hermanas Aguila*, Emilio Tuero and Ramón Armengod (ibid., 219).

[71] A *huapango*, also known as *son huasteco*, is a music and dance genre from the region of northern Veracruz and surrounding states. It is characterized by falsetto singing, a distinctive percussive strumming pattern and the ornamented style of the violin (Sheehy 2006, 34).
[72] The founding year of 1927 (Dueñas 1990) conflicts with Zolov (1999) who gives 1936 as the year Discos Peerless was formed.

The Revolution caused a lapse in recording activities. Between 1915 and 1927 there were virtually no locally-owned labels or recording studios and once the U.S. transnationals left, there was very little recording activity in the capital. The only known studio in addition to the one at *Teatro Politeama* was located at the SEP (ibid. 220). A number of performers went to the U.S. or Europe to record as a result of the situation in Mexico City. Once the Revolution ended and the U.S. transnationals returned, recording activities were restored.

Peerless was the major Mexican record label from the 1930s and most the 1940s. Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán made their first Peerless recording in 1937, which was also the year of their appearance in the film *Así es mi tierra* (That's the Way My Country Is) starring the famous comedian Cantinflas (Mario Moreno). In 1947, Baptista and Klinckwort parted ways and out of that split the label Musart was founded (Zolov 1999, 21). Musart would be an important label into the 1950s and in 1957 the Orfeón label was founded by Rogelio Azcárraga Madero, son of Mexican media mogul Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta (ibid. 20-21). In the late 1940s, Mariachi Vargas signed an exclusive contract with RCA Victor.[73] RCA would be a major label in Mexico well into the 1970s and competed with Peerless and Orfeón. As mariachi developed, particularly in the 1930s and 40s, record labels and the shift to the LP (long-playing) record shaped the perception of the mariachi repertory and standardized styles performance which have continued to influence musicians to the present day.

[73] Fuentes Gassón, personal interview. January 18, 2006, Mexico City.

Conclusion

In the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries commercial and academic interests intersected in the effort to locate and record products of musical culture. Mobile recording teams were sent throughout the U.S. and the world to record representative artists from various ethnic communities. These records were released as part of an "ethnic series" that was common for the major labels. Recordings for the Spanish-speaking market were particularly popular and mobile units did a considerable number of recordings in Mexico as well as Texas and California.

The development of sound recording technology had a tremendous impact on repertories and on performance practices within musical traditions. For mariachi, the recordings of 1908 and 1909 represented a sound that was still located in the rural context. During the 1920s, large segments of the western population moved to Mexico City and along with them, their musical culture. The recordings of Mariachi Coculense de Cirilo Marmolejo both in Mexico and the U.S. signified the popularity of mariachi as an ensemble and a repertory. As the record industry aligned with radio, mariachi expanded into new contexts of cultural production and became part of the emerging popular music industry.

Through the recording process, music was commodified as a cultural product and marketed for distribution. Related to the sale of these products was the notion of musical ownership that became a part of the buying process. Consumers essentially "owned" the sounds and, provided they had access to a phonograph, could experience these sounds within their own environment. The idea that music could be manipulated in such a way

was unthinkable prior to the invention of the phonograph and sound recording. As a result of commodification, performance practices and repertories became standardized through this circulation of sounds. In addition, as musical traditions became a part of the media production of culture, rural connections were weakened and in the case of mariachi, a strong connection with dance was deemphasized as the singing *charro* and his mariachi became the model for production.

Records and radio would be partners in the mass production of culture and their association reflected a unique interdependency. In both cases, the implications for musical production were enormous and through the activities of the media industries musical performance and performance practices were altered by new forms, contexts and conditions that emanated from the convergence of music and technology from the late nineteenth century through the 1940s.

Chapter Four: Broadcasting Identity: The Emergence of Radio

Overview

With the introduction of radio broadcast technology, a new form of mass communication entered twentieth century life. Up until the 1920s, newspapers and magazines were the only forms for the communication of information and ideas to geographically dispersed populations. In Mexico City, two newspapers established during the Revolution, *El Universal* founded in 1916 and *Excélsior* in 1917 became aligned with radio stations in the 1920s.[74] The partnership of print and radio was the first example of an integrated media approach and hinted at future financial arrangements between media industries. The linking of print and radio also demonstrated the importance of broadcast technology in the early twentieth century and the extent to which the print media wanted a stake in this new enterprise.

As the first aural form of mass communication, the impact of radio broadcasting was immediate and had the potential to cross socioeconomic boundaries traditionally divided by education and literacy. The vast influx of rural populations into the cities after the Revolution was seen as a new potential consumer market by Mexican and U.S companies and radio would provide the quickest and most efficient access to large urban populations.

[74] CYB radio was started in conjunction with *El Universal* in 1923 and CYX with *Excélsior* in 1924 (Mejía Barquera 1989, 39).

The government also recognized the importance of radio for political, social and cultural purposes. Radio became an important part of a public educational policy that gave a high priority to music and the arts. Radio broadcasts included works by a variety of art music composers particularly Manuel Ponce, Carlos Chávez and Silvestre Revueltas. Regional popular musical styles were also broadcast and these two musical forms were utilized to promote national unity and a shared identity across socioeconomic boundaries. Educational radio also broadcast a wide variety of courses to enhance efforts particularly in rural schools. In this sense, radio functioned as an arm of the government performing a political, social and cultural role through educational and entertainment broadcasts that promoted the goals of revolutionary nationalism.

Radio represented a radical change from the traditional print process and symbolized the beginning of the new age of electronic media communications. By breaking through previously impenetrable barriers of distance and time, radio created an almost seamless conceptual space whereby the real and the imaginary shared equally in the production of meaning. The "fleeting presence" of radio and the manner in which it "mimics the modern experience of reality as ephemeral and forward moving" (Hayes 2000, 20) introduced the unique experience of radio into political, economic, social and cultural life. The sense of "forward movement" evoked by the radio broadcast reflected the needs of capitalist modernity for new methods of economic expansion and the commodification of time as exemplified by the broadcast format. Radio provided an efficient means to reach vast numbers of potential customers and create new markets. As a "messenger of progress," radio quickly became important both from a political and

economic standpoint as well as in the production of culture. By the end of the 1920s, laws governing the operation of radio were in place and the potential for commercial radio was realized.

Music was an integral part of the aural experience of radio as the broadcast format and concept of the radio "program" evolved. Government-run stations in Mexico were charged with transmitting meteorological forecasts, political propaganda and educational programming while commercial stations emphasized "unofficial" news, music and other forms of entertainment (Mejía Barquera 1989, 19). Music, however, was a central organizing element in both contexts and the vehicle through which the project of cultural nationalism and capitalist forces dynamically engaged with a mass audience. The choice of composer, repertory and (in the case of folk music) regional origin, contributed to the shaping of the postrevolutionary nation and the extent to which music fulfilled a sociopolitical purpose and expression of cultural identity.

Experimental broadcasts in Mexico of the early 1920s featured primarily art music performances. In the 1930s and 40s, commercial stations flooded the musical landscape with popular music and radio shows modeled after U.S. broadcasts. Popular musical forms gained momentum during this period through live broadcasts of well-known performers such as Agustín Lara and Tito Guízar. Studio audiences were the norm and their participation added to the dynamic, live-performance aura of the variety show format. Corporate sponsors were identified with specific shows and radio personalities served not only as "hosts", but also as performers in commercials within the radio show context. As stations became allied with radio networks, the converging

interests of product advertising and the popular music industry were extended well beyond Mexico's national boundaries.[75] This style of mass communication contributed significantly not only to the economic ambitions of both Mexican and U.S. transnational companies in Latin America, but also to the proliferation of Mexican popular music throughout the Americas.[76]

In Mexico, radio's technological breakthrough coincided with the end of the Revolution and was quickly recognized for its potential as a tool in the re-imagining and re-articulation of the nation. By 1923, the government had initiated the construction of powerful transmitters in various parts of the country in an effort to achieve national coverage.[77] The establishment of a national radio system was a high priority and the creation of educational programs aimed at mass audiences resonated with the goals of cultural nationalism. Music in government and commercial radio typically included the presentation of both art and popular music traditions. Although programs tended to distinguish between these musical forms, one program in particular broke historical divisions not only between "art" and "popular" music, but also divisions of musical taste associated with class-based audiences – *La hora nacional*.

La hora nacional (The National Hour) was a government radio program begun in 1937 and was a required broadcast for all stations throughout the country (Hayes 2000,

[75] For example, Colgate-Palmolive sponsored regular radio shows on XEW radio – the most powerful station in the western hemisphere. These types of radio shows continued through the 1950s and into the 1960s. This comment is based on my own experience listening to various recorded radio shows located in the XEW radio archive.

[76] After the success of *Allá en el Rancho Grande*, Tito Guízar toured Latin America with performances in "Perú, Venezuela, Colombia, Panamá, Centroamérica and Cuba." (*El Heraldo* 7 jul 1992). Jorge Negrete also had a large following that included Spain and Caribbean (de Laviada 1994, 36-37)

[77] Powerful transmitters were installed in Monterrey, Chihuahua, Hermosillo, Federal District, Guadalajara and Merida (Mejía Barquera 1989, 23).

67). The musical portion of this program typically presented art music by composers such as Manuel Ponce and Carlos Chávez alongside popular performers like Jorge Negrete and Pedro Infante in a panorama-style musical program. The positioning of popular musical styles and art music forms emphasized the power of music in the construction of identity and its dynamic role in the production of revolutionary nationalism.

Radio broadcast technology merged the processes of mass communication with the goals of capitalist modernity to facilitate the expansion of U.S. business interests into Mexico and Latin America in general. The development of advertising in the early twentieth century was conceptualized as a way to not only to increase sales, but also as a means to create new markets (Hayes 2000, 31). Newspapers and magazines were the primary formats for advertising consumer products in the 1920s. While some expensive items such as automobiles were sold to Mexican elites, the marketing of less expensive products to the broader urban population included "soaps, dental hygiene products, beauty aids and processed foods and drinks" (ibid.). These products would become staples of the radio industry as marketing concepts and radio programming combined to produce shows that were created primarily for the sale of consumer products.

The formation of RCA (Radio Corporation of America) in 1919 and the concept of the radio network advanced the expansion of U.S. consumer-based companies into Mexico and Latin America. RCA was an essential partner in this process since it was the

main supplier of radio technology and equipment in Mexico.[78] In addition, some of the future Mexican singing stars appeared on U.S. radio shows in the late 1920s/early 30s and gained valuable experience prior to their debuts on Mexican radio.[79] Although there was no official network affiliation between the U.S. and Mexican radio stations in the 1920s, transactions involving technology, equipment and human resources were important for both industries. In the 1930s, the concept of the radio show contributed to the presentation of Mexican popular music to the public and illustrated the extent to which revolutionary nationalism meshed with capitalism in the production of culture. The expansion of U.S. companies in Mexican commercial radio contributed to this development thus calling for a transnational approach when considering the emergence of Mexican popular music in the postrevolutionary period.

This chapter focuses on the history of government and commercial radio in Mexico and particularly its relationship with art and popular music in the nationalist efforts between 1920 and 1942. Government radio under the auspices of the SEP was primarily a tool for public education beginning in the 1920s. Commercial radio also began at approximately the same time and, with the emergence of Radio XEW in 1930, entered a "golden age" that exported Mexican popular music throughout the world. Even though government and commercial radio operated in different spheres of influence, as a

[78] Emilio Azcárraga Vidauretta, the most important entrepreneur in Mexican media history, was also the owner of Mexico Music, the distributor for RCA-built radio receptors in Mexico. Later in the 1930s and 40s, Azcárraga Vidauretta was integral to the recording activities of RCA Victor Mexicana. (Rosado 2000, 15-16).

[79] Agustín Lara and Tito Guízar traveled together to New York City in 1929 to record for RCA Victor and perform at various venues "among them the Roxy, Paramount, Strant, Capitol and others" (Pérez Medina 1999, 3). Jorge Negrete also lived in New York City in 1936 performing in clubs and on radio (Buraya 2005, 37).

medium of mass communication, radio exemplified the interconnectedness of music, technology, politics and identity.

Government & Commercial Radio in Mexico in the 1920s

Radio could not have emerged at a more opportune time in Mexico's turbulent history. After a decade of economic and political uncertainty, it was imperative that the new Sonoran president, General Álvaro Obregón begin rebuilding the nation, its institutions and foster a sense of national unity. Although radio did not immediately impact these efforts, its potential was recognized early-on and political avenues were established for its development in the mid 1920s and into the 1930s.[80] As radio gained in political, economic and cultural importance, laws was written to control growth and as with any type of capitalist enterprise, personal and political connections could be helpful. For example, Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta founder of XEW married the daughter of Patricio Milmo, a powerful banker and member of the Monterrey-based investor group, *El Grupo Monterrey*. This group also included the family of Constentino Tárnava, the engineer credited with the first private radio broadcast in Mexico (Arredondo Ramírez and Sánchez Ruíz 1986, 94).

From 1920 to 1922, radio was still in the experimental stage with virtually no government oversight. Early experiments occurred simultaneously in different parts of the country and there was not a concerted effort on the part of the government to control early experimentations in radio broadcasting (Mejía Barquera no date, 1). Broadcasts

[80] In 1925, there were a total of eleven radio stations in the country and seven of them were located in Mexico City (Mejía Prieto 1972, 32).

were short and typically transmitted during the evening and late-night hours when working professionals might have the opportunity to listen. In addition, the broadcast range was limited due to the fact that there were not enough transmitters installed to provide coverage - even in Mexico City. Radio transmissions were also heard in public spaces generally by those of lower economic status while the middle and upper classes could purchase receivers for home use. Social division therefore was a part of the context for radio listening not only as an individual or collective experience that crossed socioeconomic class, but also as a potential factor in the interpretation of messages and ideas.

After the successful radio transmissions of1921, the government devised a plan for a broader national system. It was decided that a mixture of government and privately-owned stations would be the most beneficial and, furthermore, reduce the financial burden for the State (Mejía Barquera, 1989, 19). Obregón expressed a desire to allow entrepreneurs the opportunity to become involved in the broadcast business. In January of 1922, he announced that the government would help those interested in the radio broadcast industry with "the creation of legislative, administrative and political conditions necessary in order to develop radio stations" (ibid.). The first private radio stations appeared in 1923 and by the end of the decade, radio would have a prominent position in Mexican political, economic and cultural life.

The population of Mexico City grew considerably following the end of revolutionary violence.[81] When the fighting ceased and military men and women returned to their homes and villages, they soon realized that the rural economy was in ruins.[82] All facets of the Mexican economy including manufacturing, agriculture, mining and transportation declined during the Revolution. The only exception was the oil industry which actually grew during the same period (Aguilar Camín and Meyer 1993, 71). The effects of the Revolution and the changes in the rural economy prompted large populations to move to the cities in search of work. Mexico City in particular absorbed large numbers of people in the 1920s and into the 30s. While the majority of Mexico's population would remain rural through the 1940s, urban centers grew at an unprecedented rate. With this shift in population density, new markets for consumer products emerged and Mexican as well as U.S. transnational corporations responded with an approach to consumer advertising that focused on the products of daily life used by urban populations of various class positions.

Government efforts with regard to radio began soon after the end of revolutionary violence. On September 27, 1921, as part of the Centenary Celebration of the Declaration of Independence, the Mexican government broadcast "public messages" from the *Palacio Legislativo* (Legislative Palace) and, on that same day, another experimental broadcast was made from the basement of the Ideal Theater that featured the tenor voice

[81] Following the Revolution, Mexico City's population jumped "from 470,000 Porfirian inhabitants to 659,000 postrevolutionary inhabitants" (Aguilar Camín and Meyer 1993, 73).
[82] For a discussion of women in the revolutionary armies see Salas (1990).

of José Mojica[83] and Italian Pablo Tosti (Rosado 2000, 9). These broadcasts were the first in Mexico City and demonstrate how quickly radio technology was implemented only one year after the end of the Revolution. In October of 1921 in the northern city of Monterrey, an engineer by the name of Constantino de Tárnava transmitted a musical program that was likely the first private radio broadcast in Mexico.[84] Tárnava, who attended St. Edward's College in Austin, Texas and Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana, produced a program that featured soprano María Ytirria, pianist Carlos Pérez Maldonado, tenor Aubrey St. John Clerke and orator Audoxio Villarreal (Mejía Barquera no date, 2).[85]

In 1922, the government began making plans for a station operated by the SEP. Although he was the architect of cultural nationalism, José Vasconcelos, was no longer minister of education when the first transmission took place in 1924. His thoughts on the subject were noted (probably around 1923) as he acknowledged the importance of the new medium:

> It is necessary to utilize modern means like radiotelephony in our educational crusade. It is for this reason that I will solicit President Obregón for a Secretaría de Educación radio station. Then, we will see a form of support by providing radio receptors to the corresponding schools, and we will initiate transmission in order to add effectiveness to our teaching programs and the spiritual culture of the people. We will put to use a station that will be a powerful pedagogical aid to the teacher and that, among other things, would constitute a great spoken library.

[83] José Mojíca (1895-1974) studied voice with José Pierson and was a member of the Chicago Opera from 1919-1930 (Steane 2006). Pierson was the voice teacher of Tito Guízar (Aviña 2000, 57) and Jorge Negrete (Serna 1993, 28).
[84] Arredondo Ramírez and Sanchez Ruiz noted reports of "first" broadcasts that may have occurred prior to Tárnava's (94).
[85] Maria Ytirria was a fourteen year old soprano sang *Violetas* by Miguel Lerdo de Tejada on this broadcast ("Relato del 9 Octubre de 1921." <http://www.geocities.com/familiatarnava/>). accessed April 11, 2006.

> Es necessario utlizar media modernos como radiotelephonía en nuestra cruzada educative. Es por ello que solicitaré al presidente Obregón una emisora de radio para la Secretaría de Educación. Luego, veremos la forma de dotar a las escuelas de los correspondientes aparatos receptors, y emplearemos al transmission para dar mayor efectividad a nuestro programas de enseñanza y cultivo espiritual del pueblo mexicano. Se trata de poner en uso una estación que sea poderoso auxiliary pedagógico del maestro y que, entre otras cosas, constituya una gran biblioteca hablada (quoted in León López 2005, 32).

Reading and writing programs were central to the mission of the SEP in its efforts to create a literate citizenry. Vasconcelos positioned literature and the arts as essential elements in his educational policy and referred to them as the "two great pillars" in the architecture of education (ibid.). At the inauguration of the SEP radio station CZE on November 30, 1924, new SEP director, Dr. Bernardo Gastélum, addressed the public saying:

> Teachers, Workers and Students: The Ministry of Education ends its work during the Presidency period of Sir General Don Álvaro Obregón, inaugurating this new source of diffusion of thought that will carry like a shining light to all corners of the country the voice of the teacher, the eloquent word of our most distinguished intellectuals and the harmonies that will lead to surprise in the classroom, in the lecture hall or in the artist's studio, evoking in the spiritual remembrance of ancient and romantic visions, the most noble emotions, enclosed in the beautiful soul and charitable mind.
>
> Maestros, Obreros y Estudiantes: La Secretaría de Educación Pública termina su labor durante el periodo Presidencial del Sr. Gral. Don Álavaro Obregón, inaugurando esta nueva fuente de diffusion del pensamiento que llevará como un reguero luminoso a todos los rincones del país la voz del maestro, la palabra elocuente de nuestros más distinguidos intelectuales y las armonías que irán a sorprender en el aula, en la cátedra o en el taller, evocando en el éspiritu el recuerdo de antiguas y románticas visions, las emociones más nobles, que han de inculcar la belleza en el alma y caridad en la mente (ibid. 40).

Vasconcelos' vision for the SEP was greatly enhanced by the introduction of radio. As a tool for the government's educational ambition, radio played a significant role in the

formation of modern Mexican society. But there were limitations too. Government stations did not have the same broadcast range as commercial stations nor did their programs posses the same entertainment value. In addition, there was always a shortage of government receivers available for distribution to rural areas. The audiences for SEP radio therefore, were typically smaller and somewhat limited to teachers, urban working professionals. Nevertheless, SEP radio impacted the population on various levels through educational programs and broadcasts that fulfilled a social need and reflected a degree of social responsibility on the part of the government, especially with regard to rural populations.

The first licenses for commercial radio stations were granted in 1922 (Fox 1995, 523). Radio station CYL, started by Raúl Azcárraga (brother of future media magnate Emilio) "acquired a transmitter from RCA and on May 8, 1923 at 8pm had its first formal transmission" (Mejía Prieto 1972, 26).[86] The station was founded in partnership with *El Universal,* a Mexico City newspaper owned by Félix Palavicini and "broadcast only on Tuesdays and Fridays from 9 to 11 pm, a careful selection of classical music, with Spanish singers and members of schools of music" (León López 2005, 34).[87] The alignment of newspapers with radio stations was based on a U.S. model that linked radio with the print industry so that newspapers could be exclusively connected to this rapid disseminator of information. In the case of CYL, radio production extended to more than

[86] This inaugural transmission included participation of Spanish guitarist Andrés Segovia, the composer Manuel Ponce, pianist Manuel Barajas and diva Celia Montalbán (Mejía Barquera date unknown, 3)
[87] Palavicini is included in *Hispanistas Mexicanos* (1920) by Pedro Serrano. This entry and quotes from Palavicini portrayed hispanicist tendencies (1-5).

El Universal and included *Cervecería Modelo* (Modelo Brewery Co.).[88] Raúl Azcárraga also operated *La Casa del Radio* (The House of Radio) in Mexico City which sold radio receivers and other equipment. The production and sale of receivers was an extremely important aspect of the radio industry and crucial to its growth. Due to his brother Emilio's connections with RCA, Raúl Azcárraga was able to obtain licensing for the sale of RCA receivers in Mexico and his most notable client, President Obregón, purchased high quality receivers in 1923 and 1924 (ibid.).

Radio CYB was started by *El Buen Tono* (The Good Tone), a cigarette and cigar-producing company that was started in Mexico with French financial backing during the Porfirian period (Buffington and French 2000, 420-421). CYB debuted with a broadcast of the Independence Day ceremony on September 15, 1923. This station, whose call letters were later changed to "XEB" in 1929, was important in the development of Mexican popular music throughout the 1930s, 40s and into the 1950s. Agustín Lara, Pedro Infante, and *Los Panchos* were but a few of the well-known artists who performed regularly on "La Grande B" (Sosa Plata 1999).

Radio allowed for the immediate dissemination of news, information and entertainment into private and public spaces over vast distances. In Mexico, radio became the most important means of official government communication and a vital tool in the spread of revolutionary nationalism. Under the direction of José Vasconcelos, public education improved through the building of new schools, libraries as well as

[88] This model was based on the involvement of the St. Louis Dispatch, Kansas City Star Telegram and San Antonio Express respectively in the creation of local stations in those U.S. cities. In addition, *Modelo* sponsored the first concert transmission of CYL radio (Mejía Barquera, 39).

reading and writing programs. The addition of radio to the mission of the SEP provided an opportunity to impact a larger audience and contribute significantly as an instrument of cultural nationalism. As a means for reaching the masses, radio was the ultimate communicative tool, however access to transmissions would remain a challenge for the lower economic classes in the 1920s and 30s.

The SEP & Radio (1921-1934)

In 1905, Porfiro Díaz created a Ministry of Education with Justo Sierra as director and in 1910 the National University was founded (Buffington and French 2000, 409). Education was given a high priority and crucial to Mexico's ability to fulfill its capitalist dreams. Even though the gains made under Díaz were lost during the Revolution, the realization and understanding of education as foundational to the stability and growth of a society was continued in the postrevolutionary period.

In January of 1921, President Álvaro Obregón authorized a project for José Vasconcelos, former rector of the National University, "to accelerate the education of the people" (Leon Lopez 2005, 29). Libraries were constructed throughout the country and methods of instruction were distributed in the effort to help rural teachers and to establish standard teaching practices. This project led Obregón to create the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP) on September 29, 1921 and to appoint José Vasconcelos its first director.

Illiteracy rates were still high in 1920 and Mexico was in poor economic and social condition (Crespo 2005, 101). Given these circumstances, it was not only a

philosophical choice, but also a practical one for Vasconcelos to advocate music, theatre and the visual arts as unifying elements in postrevolutionary constructions of identity. Non-literary forms such as visual art and music were conceived as artistic works that could be experienced by the entire population and therefore held great cultural potential for the promotion of nationalist ideals.

The SEP was divided into three departments: scholastic, fine arts and libraries/archives. In the area of music, the Department of Fine Arts was given the responsibility of music education in public schools, teachers' colleges, festivals and choral societies (León López 2005, 31-32). The goals for the SEP included the institution of reading and writing programs and courses on a variety of subjects, yet Vasconcelos also intended "to stimulate the study and perfection of dance, theatre and music" (ibid.).

The first transmission of SEP radio was on July 15, 1924. A transmitter was acquired from a radio station in New York State, sent to Mexico and installed in the SEP building. The station began with the call letters CYE, but a few days later changed them to CZE. Even though it only produced five-hundred watts of power, CZE radio could be heard in the U.S., Central and South America especially during the evening hours when there was little interference (ibid., 38). Courses were offered on a wide variety of topics and by 1928, CZE was being broadcast to public schools in the states of Puebla, Hidalgo, Tlaxcala and Morelos.

Under President Plutarco Calles (1924-1928) the government moved in a more socialist direction and began to enforce Articles from the Constitution of 1917 that

limited the activities of the Catholic Church.[89] This action was met with considerable resistance by the rural populations in a number of states and especially in the western region. The subsequent violence known as the *Cristero* Rebellion began in 1926 and a negotiated settlement was reached in 1929. It was a very costly war and demonstrated a level of religious intensity within the population that had not manifested itself to that point.[90] The *Cristero* Rebellion illustrated the contentious relationship between the government and rural populations in the mid to late 1920s. While the SEP continued its work during this period, many teachers in rural areas were not always welcomed since their work to alleviate illiteracy was not something that local landowners felt was in their best interest (Benjamin 2000, 481).

From 1931-1934 Narciso Bassols, a declared Marxist, became director of the SEP. During his tenure, station XFX (formerly CZE) began full-day broadcasts as radio moved from a marginal position within the government to a central one in the effort to standardize rural education and reach out to distant communities. During daytime hours the schedule of courses included "language, history, geography, and hygiene" while the evening programming "was devoted predominately to musical programs but also included conferences, literature readings and radio theater" (Hayes 2000, 44-45).

In *Radio Nation* (2000), Joy Hayes discussed various aspects of the history of radio in Mexico and specifically musical programs produced by XFX. She noted that musical programs typically presented art and popular music forms separately and as one

[89] See Chapter Two for my discussion of the *Cristero* Rebellion.
[90] It is estimated that the *Cristero* Rebellion resulted in perhaps 70,000 deaths and forced the government to expend nearly half of the country's budget on this conflict (Benjamin 2000, 484).

would expect, Ponce, Chávez, and Revueltas were listed along with well-known European composers. She also pointed out that European and Mexican art music constituted 62% of all evening musical programs and popular music comprised 18% with remaining percentages devoted to military band-style music and international popular music (53). These percentages were based on a report from the *Oficina Cultural Radiotelefónica* (Cultural Office of Radiotelephony) from March to December 1933. As Hayes acknowledges, specific musical works were typically not listed in XFX schedules and therefore it is impossible to know exactly what was performed. Nonetheless, the conclusion drawn from the statistical analysis was that the music broadcasted was "more compatible with a project of hispanidad than indigenismo" since "Chavez had not yet written his indigenous symphonies" (55). It is true that *Sinfonía India* was not completed until 1935 however this conclusion ignored Chavez's early *indigenismo*-inspired works such as *El Fuego Nuevo* (1921) and *Los Cuatro Soles* (1925). While I generally agree that the predominance of art music in radio broadcasts supported a *hispanista* vision, it was not due to Chavez, but to the political ideology of cultural nationalism and its manifestation in social and cultural life that emphasized Spanish and mestizo folk influences within the art music tradition.

On January 15, 1937, the government decreed that a weekly radio program called *La hora nacional* (The National Hour) would be broadcast by all stations throughout the Mexico. This was a required broadcast for all radio stations (government and commercial) and was cited as an official communication by the government to the people (Mejía Barquera no date, 6). The declaration was made during the administration of

Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940), the most liberal of Mexico's postrevolutionary presidents. In December of 1936, Cardenas created the *Departamento Autónomo de Prensa y Publicidad* (The Independent Department of the Press and Publicity) known as DAPP. Under DAPP, the government "centralized regulatory control over the content of most of Mexico's communication media, including radio broadcasting, newspapers, films, books, magazines, and the theater" (Hayes 2000, 66). In addition to the creation of DAPP, the Cárdenas administration changed some of the communication laws in 1936 by increasing the amount of time that the government could broadcast on commercial stations along with the demand that stations increase programming of "typical" Mexican music (ibid., 66-67).

La hora nacional was a radio broadcast that included just about everything - music, poetry, history, official government announcements, etc. - with the government portion lasting approximately twenty minutes. In many ways, this broadcast resembled SEP radio in its "panorama-style format" and the valorization of the arts (Hayes 2000, 68). This particular format that presented art music alongside regional folk music broke down musical divisions and allowed for the conceptualization of Mexican music as a national cultural product. This type of presentation sought to expose the population to cultural forms of a nationalist character and through this process symbolically elevated popular music traditions particularly for the middle and upper classes.

In the 1940s, *La hora nacional* changed its programming in order to reflect its internationalist position during the World War II years (Miller 1998, 74-75). Mexico assumed the role of leader in Latin America and this resulted in programs that were

broader in scope.[91] For example, a program might be devoted to the music of a particular nation such as a 1943 broadcast that was devoted to the music of Costa Rica (ibid., 79). During the war years, Mexican government radio also displayed solidarity with the U.S. and the feeling of pan-americanism that characterized this particular period. As an official source for government communication, *La hora nacional* represented a sociopolitical dimension whereby a national program was carried by commercial and government stations in order to facilitate promote and preserve the tenets of revolutionary nationalism.

In the 1920s and 30s government broadcasts of educational and entertainment programs were designed to fulfill the goals of postrevolutionary nationalism and the communication of a national culture. Through radio broadcasts, particularly on XFX, music was offered as a product of Mexican culture that could be appreciated regardless of social class. Given that radio broadcast audiences were limited and that there were never enough receivers to reach all rural communities, the use of government radio stations for the promotion of cultural nationalism was incomplete. In an effort to achieve greater coverage as well as establish an international media leadership presence particularly within Latin America, commercial radio emerged as the vehicle that represented the most effective means of broadcast communication that served the purposes of both capitalist modernity and national identity.

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[91] A two film examples that placed Mexico in leadership were *La liga de las canciones*, (*The League of Songs*, 1942) and *Soy puro mexicano* (*I Am Pure Mexican*, 1942). In *La liga de canciones*, Mexico is promoting goodwill among the Americas and the Caribbean by organizing a musical review. In *Soy puro mexicano*, a *charro* (Pedro Armendáriz) thwarts German and Japanese spies as attempt to infiltrate Mexico. Both of these films were viewed at Filmoteca de la UNAM in October, 2005.

Radio XEW: *"La Voz de América Latina desde México"*

Founded by Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta, Radio XEW was a major force in the broadcasting of Mexican popular music. Azcárraga, a businessman with no previous experience in broadcast technology, would eventually become the most powerful media figure in Mexico encompassing not only radio, but also recording, film production and television. The most well-known performers in Mexican popular music at the time appeared on XEW and on radio shows such as *La hora azul* (*The Blue Hour*) *La hora intimada de Agustín Lara* (*An Intimate Hour with Agustín Lara*), and *Cancionero Picot*.[92] XEW radio sponsors also included Mexican and U.S. companies such as Carta Blanca, Colgate and Coca-Cola (Rosado 2000 63-69). These and other companies were constant reminders that commercial radio was an advertising medium and musical performance was a dynamic participant in this process.

Initially broadcasting at five-thousand watts, XEW was a powerful station in 1930. By 1934, it was transmitting at fifty-thousand watts and in 1935 at two-hundred fifty-thousand watts (Rosado 2000, 19). XEW transmitted ninety-five programs per day of varying time lengths of four, fourteen, eighteen and twenty-eight minutes. In1938, XEW was heard in Hawaii, Czechoslovakia, Germany, England as well as other countries (Mejía Barquera, 52). With global coverage, XEW was the major broadcast force in the popularization of Mexican music in the 1930s and 40s and contributed in a significant way to the broadcasting of Mexican identity throughout the world.

[92] This sponsor will be discussed in some detail later in this chapter.

Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta was born in Tampico, Tamaulipas on March 2, 1895. He attended public school in Piedras Negras and middle/high school in Texas. Early on he was the distributor for a Boston shoe company and later opened the first Ford dealerships in Puebla (1919), León (1920) and San Luis Potosí (1921) (Mejía Barquera 1989, 52). In the early 1920s, Emilio Azcárraga married the daughter of Patricio Milmo, a wealthy banker and investor in Monterrey. Although Patricio Milmo and Sons had interests in mining and railroad, it is interesting to note that their investment strategy changed after the end of the Revolution and they developed interests in the radio broadcast industry (Olmos no date, 1-2).

Azcárraga started his media empire as a distributor of RCA radio receivers through his Mexico Music Company. In 1923, he also obtained the rights to distribute phonographs for Victor Talking Machine Company. Azcárraga built a number of movie theaters in Mexico City and the first studios of XEW were on the second floor of his theater *Cine Olympia* (Olympic Cinema). Azcárraga's ties with RCA led to the affiliation of XEW with the NBC radio network. In 1938, a second station, XEQ, became affiliated with the CBS radio network. So, in a very short time, Azcárraga had affiliates with the two largest U.S. radio networks and a virtual monopoly on commercial radio in Mexico with fourteen stations in the NBC network and, by 1945, seventeen stations in the CBS network (Arredondo Ramírez and Sánchez Ruiz 1986, 102).

By the 1940s, Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta was the most important figure in twentieth century Mexican media history. He would reach and even greater heights of influence with an expansion into television in 1951 (Arredondo Ramírez and Sánchez

Ruiz 1986, 116). Prior to the first broadcast of XEW, an article appeared in a magazine published by Mexico Music Co., describing the future plans for the station:

> With enthusiasm we convey the conclusion of efforts that will form the mighty radio station XEW, one of the most powerful in the continent of Latin America... Station XEW will be fifteen times stronger than any of the largest stations that exist today in the capital. (…)…in one of the most suitable buildings in the center of the metropolitan capital, the artistic studios of radio station XEW will be installed with all of the latest equipment.
>
> Con positive entusiasmo y actividad se llevan a cabo las obras cuyo conjunto formarán la ponderosa estación radiodifusora XEW, una de las más potentes del continente latinoamericano…La estación XEW será de una potencia 15 veces mayor que cualquiera de las grandes estaciones que hoy existen en la capital. (…)…en uno de los más apropiados edificios del centro de la urbe capitalina, se instalarán con todos los adelantos modernos los estudios artísticos de la estación XEW (quoted in Rosado 2000, 15).

Prior to the first broadcast, Azcárraga searched for a slogan for his new station. The phrase *"La Voz de América Latina desde México"* ("The Voice of Latin America from Mexico") was attributed to Arturo García, a well-known writer and comedian in the Mexico City theater community (ibid., 15). This phrase implied a leadership role for Mexico (and XEW) within Latin America and position as a representative voice for Latin America to the rest of the world.

Radio XEW had its inaugural broadcast on September 18, 1930. The program opened with *Marcha de la Alegría* by Miguel Lerdo de Tejada performed by the *Orquesta Típica de la Policía* (Mexico City Police Band) (Guerrero 2005, 1). A sampling of that broadcast, in addition to the Police Band (under the direction of Lerdo de Tejada) included vocalist Juan Arvisu, pianist Ofelia Euroza, guitarist Francisco Salinas, Josefina Aguilar, composer Jorge del Moral and Alfonso Ortiz Tirado (Mejía Prieto 1972, 38). In

addition, *Cuarteto Tamaulipecos* (a group that included actor/composers Lorenzo Barcelata and Ernesto Cortázar) ended the evening with the most recognized *son* from the mariachi repertory – *La Negra*:

> The participation of the *Cuarteto Tamaulipecos* received the most telephone requests, interpreting first the Mexican song, *Sonecitos*, the *son huasteco La rejaga*, a *corrido* by Lorenzo Barcelata *El toro* (*The Bull*) and, near the end of the celebration, the *son jalisciense La negra* in which maestro Pascual Viderique played the violin part.
>
> Las intervenciones del Cuarteto Tamaulipecos fueron las más solicitadas a través del teléfono, interpretando inicialmente la canción mexicana "Sonecitos," el son huasteco "La rejega", el corrido de Lorenzo Barcelata "El toro" y, casi al final de la fiesta, el son jalisciense de "La negra," que en la parte de violin estuvo a cargo del maestro Pascual Viderique (Rosado 2000, 18)

The first broadcast of XEW contained a variety of popular music and folk genres as the above quotation suggests. Radio XEW was instrumental in programming regional mestizo music along with modern popular music. In this way, mariachi forms were absorbed into standard radio practices and the emerging popular music industry in general. By its inclusion in commercial radio programming, mariachi became a part of the media production of culture and, as mariachi moved away from its rural roots, it became more closely aligned with the practices of the popular music industry.

The importance of Radio XEW to the development of mariachi as an ensemble and a repertory goes beyond the popularization of the tradition to the shaping of the sound and its presentation through practices of "radio broadcast culture." As noted earlier, radio broadcasting began in the 1920s. At that time, the art music tradition was considered to be the music style which displayed true aesthetic value along with the nineteenth century notion of "the artist" as an enigma of creativity. In addition, opera

and art music were the preferred musical forms of the upper classes and as radio emerged and the first receivers were bought, it was the upper classes with the means to purchase them and therefore comprised the majority of listeners.

In terms of vocal production, performers of opera and art music displayed the characteristics of the "trained" voice. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the *bel canto* vocal style was fashionable and featured a rich, full-bodied vocal quality. As a result, this type of voice was selected for radio and became the standard for not only broadcasting, but also recording. A sound aesthetic that reflected the musical qualities of a trained voice was adopted by the broadcast industry and was revealed in the voice of the first singing *charro*, Tito Guízar.

Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán appeared more than any other mariachi on XEW and in addition to being a featured ensemble the group, accompanied a large number of vocalists on numerous broadcasts (Fuentes Gassón, personal interview, January 18, 2006, Mexico City). It is curious that while other groups may have tried, they were not able to perform with regularity on XEW. This may have been due to the fact that the early urban mariachi groups of the 1920s did not posses the sound or a performance aesthetic that resonated with either the producers of radio broadcasts or their audience. However, in the early years of radio, Mariachi Coculense de Cirilo Marmolejo performed on radio stations CYX associated with *Excélsior* (August 4, 1925) and CYB partnered with *El Universal* (August 9, 1925) (Jaúregui 1990, 41). Due in large part to the emergence of the singing *charro* in the late 1930s (and certainly the early 1940s), mariachi shifted to a performance aesthetic with a close relationship to the standards and practices of the

popular music industry. And, as a result of recordings and later films, this particular sound was standardized and became the accepted style of performance.

The majority of broadcast time on XEW was dedicated to musical programming and, although it was affiliated with the NBC radio network, "no U.S. dramatic programs were rebroadcast in the prime evening hours" (Hayes 2000, 71). The broadcasting of Mexican popular music was the force that drove XEW to international success and Azcárraga was able to capitalize on the performances of outstanding musicians and singers due to his connections not only with NBC and CBS, but also with RCA Victor and the record industry. Azcárraga's position between U.S. transnationals and Mexican corporate interests made him indispensable to both and he was an essential partner in the confluence if capitalism and the production of culture in the 1930s and 40s.

XEW was known as *La Cathedral de la Radio* (The Cathedral of Radio) because of its stature and position as the leader in radio broadcasting for Mexico and Latin America. The careers of the most well-known performers of Mexican popular music were linked to XEW as the power source for the musical projection of Mexican culture to an international audience. The "cathedral" produced live performances that shaped the direction of musical repertories and the careers of its performers. As an institution of radio broadcast communications, XEW linked Mexico and Latin America with the rest of the world and through its musical programs projected a version of Mexican national identity to a national and international audience.

Radio, Print, Music: Cancionero Picot

The concept of the radio show was a natural development in the format expansion that was specifically designed for the marketing of commercial products. Since the early stations CYX (*Excélsior*) and CYB (*El Universal*), the relationship between print and radio has revolved around advertising. The revenue producing element for the print media was "space" and, in radio, it was the element of "time." The radio show provided the opportunity to combine print capitalism with the musical broadcast.

Cancionero Picot (*The Picot Songbook*) was a longstanding radio show that started in 1931 on XEW and is a classic example of how music, print and radio were employed in the capitalist enterprise.[93] The word *Picot* came from Picot Laboratories in Wilmington, Delaware and *Picot* was the name of the drink marketed in Mexico beginning in the 1920s. The *Cancionero Picot* was also a monthly publication with lyrics of current songs as well as classics printed in a magazine-style format. The publication was originally started in 1923 in collaboration with Radio XEB (Rosado 2000, 67). Advertisements for Picot the drink were on every page along with a thematic cover design. The *cancionero* included the title, composer and lyrics for numerous songs and was published from the 1930s through the 1970s.

There were two prominent characters in the publication that served as the "faces" of Picot. One was a smiling, portly man with a large mustache who would typically be dressed as a *ranchero* and the other a woman dressed in the *china poblana* costume. In

[93] Three examples of *Cancionero Picot* songbooks (1960, 1961 and 1962) were examined at *La Biblioteca Nacional* (The National Library) on the UNAM campus in January of 2005.

the radio show, these characters were given human voices t and appeared as "hosts" of the show.[94] The show itself followed the variety format with music, interspersed with comedy and advertisements.

The concept of the *Cancionero Picot* radio show is an example of the merger of music, print and radio in support of capitalist ambitions. Although the actual *Cancionero* was a collection of lyrics and images, in the radio show format, the characters for *Cancionero Picot* were given personalities that made them a part of reality for listeners. In this way, the radio show transcended the fixed nature of the *Canionero Picot* and made it appealing to a wide audience.

Jorge Negrete & Radio (1931-1941)

Jorge Negrete was the classic version of the singing *charro* on radio, recordings and films from the 1930s until his death in 1953. His baritone voice was distinctly different from the tenor Tito Guízar and while he had similar training, the strength of his voice produced a sound that resonated with the nationalist projection of *mexicanidad*. Although his career did not skyrocket until the films of the early 1940s, his work in radio reflected a strategic move away from opera to popular musical styles and it was the combination of his operatic baritone and suave sentimentalism that made him unique in Mexican popular song.

Jorge Negrete began his radio career in 1931 on radio XETR and performed under the pseudo-name of Alberto Moreno. His reasons for this were twofold: first, since he

[94] The XEW (Radio Televisa) sound archive in Mexico City was accessed in January 2005. No recordings of the *Cancionero Picot* radio show prior to 1961 were found.

was in the military at the time, he was not allowed to sing on a commercial radio station and second, he did not want his family to know of his aspirations because they would not approve (Serna 1993, 28). At this point in his career, Negrete desired to be an opera singer and his repertory did not fit that of a commercial radio station. In 1932, he left XETR to pursue his singing career under the tutelage of José Pierson.

In 1933, Pierson arranged for Negrete to sing arias from *Rigoletto*, *Carmen* and *La Traviata* at the *Teatro Iris* and in the following year, at the *Palacio de las Bellas Artes* (Palace of the Fine Arts) in Mexico City (ibid., 30). Negrete enriched his repertory with *boleros* and *zarzuelas* and auditioned for Emilio Azcárraga at XEW; however, Azcárraga felt that Negrete lacked the necessary vocal styling for popular music performance and offered to pay his way to New York so that he could gain experience (Rosado 2000, 40).

The following year Negrete met an old friend from XETR, Miguel Bermejo – (future member of *Trío Calaveras*) and explored the possibility of forming a duet (Serna 1993, 34). Bermejo declined and Negrete instead formed a duet with Ramón Armengod (another radio, recording artist who would have a successful film career in his own right) and they left for New York in 1936 (Flores Muñoz, 8). On the way, they sang on Radio XEMR in Monterrey and, according to Enrique Serna (1993), their performance was heard by John F. Royal, a vice president of NBC. When Negrete and Armengod arrived in New York they auditioned for NBC and received a contract for a series of musical programs of Spanish romantic songs (35).

Negrete's film career began in 1937 with *La madrina del diablo* (*The Godmother of the Devil*) and in 1941 returned to XEW to participate in radio programs. His vocal

training and operatic ambitions inflected the singing *charro* sound with a richness that was missing in Tito Guízar's interpretations. Negrete's radio performances in the 1940s were connected to his films and this sound was extended to national and international audiences via the XEW/NBC radio network.

Conclusion

Radio participated directly in the development of Mexican popular music at the national and international levels. Commercial radio broadcast culture was structured around the concept of time as a commodity and music was an integral part of that process. The influx of capitalism into radio was the result of a relationship that developed between advertising and print media in the early twentieth century and, beginning in the late 1920s, that relationship was extended further to included radio and broadcast technology.

The participation of art music performers in early experimental broadcasts suggests a relationship between a musical performance aesthetic and radio culture at that particular time. Opera and musical theater (especially *zarzuela*) were popular forms in Mexico and these forms required a specific style of dramatic vocal production. Opera recordings by stars such as Enrico Caruso were popular in the early twentieth century and the appearance of vocalists on early radio broadcasts may have been a reflection of that popularity for the upper classes.[95] Also, from the perspective of sound transmission, the

[95] Enrico Caruso (1873-1921) was a "star" for Victor Records and made his first recording in 1903. A brief biography is given along with a list of available records. Caruso's records were under the Victor "Red Seal" line (Victor Catalog May, 1916).

diction and style of vocal production associated with operatic vocal techniques that may have influenced producers to select it for radio broadcast.

Mariachi was inserted into broadcast culture was subjected to standardized methods of production. This process changed the sound and performance practices of mariachi particularly through the operatic voices of the early singing *charros.* This particular type of vocal production coincided with postrevolutionary constructions of *mexicanidad* and notions of *machismo* and romanticism that were communicated through the *charro* singing voice.

Radio was also an important tool in the promotion of Mexican revolutionary nationalism that began in the 1920s and extended well into the 1940s. Government radio brought together art music and popular styles through educational programs produced for the masses and, in 1937, achieved its widest coverage in *La hora nacional.* As radio developed, information and advertising brought corporate sponsorship to the stations and radio shows were designed to fulfill the needs of the sponsors. Radio was an effective means of mass communication and through stations such as XEW, mariachi entered into the national and international consciousness as *the* sound symbol of Mexican national identity.

Chapter Five: The *Comedia Ranchera* and Sounds of *Mexicanidad*

Introduction

The era known as *El Siglo de Oro* or "Golden Age" of Mexican film was comprised of a variety of genres and one of the most notable was the *comedia ranchera*. This is the genre identified with *Allá en el Rancho Grande* (*Over at the Big Ranch,* 1936) the most popular film produced by the Mexican movie industry up to that time (García Riera 1992, 211). The box office success of this film brought legitimacy to the industry and the *comedia ranchera* genre became a staple of Mexican film for more than twenty-five years. Music was a primary element in the genre and featured songs were sung by the *charro* character with his mariachi in festive scenes that were staged for the purpose of highlighting the talents of the "star" and promoting the title song.[96] Due to their widespread distribution and overwhelming popularity among Spanish-speaking audiences, the featured songs composed for the films quickly found their way into the mariachi repertory and their manner of performance was fixed within the voice of the *charro* and the accompaniment of his mariachi.

Allá en el Rancho Grande has been described as having elements of *sainete,* musical review, *zarzuela,* variety-theater and folk parody (de los Reyes 1987, 142).[97]

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[96] See Chapter One for a discussion of the *charro* under the heading: "The *Charro, Los Altos* and Postrevolutionary Nationalism."

[97] A one-act form that was typically performed at the end of a larger work, *sainete* originated in 18th Spain and was a play based on everyday life which was usually set to music or had musical numbers set to it (*The New Harvard Dictionary of Music* , 1986, s.v. "Sainete."). *Zarzuela* is Spanish theatrical genre that uses both singing and dialogue. It first appeared in the 17th century as a "musical court play intended for performance at the royal hunting lodge or Palace of the Zarzuela outside Madrid." (The New Harvard

The frequent changes in scenes, musical performances and the roles of the different characters in the progression of the plot contributed to the notion of a theatrical mixture driving the film. The degree to which these theatrical and musical elements were presented within the context of *Allá en el Rancho Grande* may have been its most unique contribution since it was not the first film (sound or "silent") to utilize a hacienda/ranch theme.[98]

Drama, comedy and musical performance were weaved into a folkloric storyline that was popular with audiences. Comedy was not the defining element in the *comedia ranchera* genre and the English translation to "ranch comedy" (Rubenstein 2000, 649) inflates the comedic contribution over the musical and the dramatic. Although comedy was important to the genre, it was used mainly to transition the storyline, enhance dialogue, and divert attention or to momentarily suspend action.[99] I would offer the term "ranch play" as an English alternative that would communicate a better understanding of the genre as a whole and reconnect the word *comedia* to a concept of drama which may or may not include comedy.[100] This would not only allow the genre to be considered as a cinematic form comprised of diverse elements but also incorporate a serious film such as

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Dictionary of Music, 1986), s.v. "Zarzuela."). The term "variety theater" or *teatro de variedades* refers to a type of popular theater analogous to vaudeville in the U.S. (personal interview Flores y Escalante, January 19, 2006)

[98] The "silent" films most often cited as forerunners to *Allá en el Rancho Grande* are *En la hacienda* and *El caporal* ("The Foreman") both from 1921 (de los Reyes 1987; García Riera 1992). *Mano a mano* ("Hand to Hand") (1932) was sound film set in a hacienda with music by Lorenzo Barcelata and was the earliest sound film I had the opportunity to view at La Filmoteca de UNAM.

[99] This observation is based on the personal viewing of a numerous films in the *comedia ranchera* genre.

[100] A *comedia* was a secular play from early Spanish drama that could be serious or comic. *The Concise Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, s.v. "Comedia," <http://www.oxfordreference.com.content.lib.utexas.edu:2048/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t79.e696> (accessed May 25, 2006).

El peñón de las ánimas (*The Mount of the Spirits*, 1942) that has been categorized as a "drama," but includes mariachi performance.[101] The translation of *comedia ranchera* to "ranch play" places less emphasis on comedic aspects and allows for a more balanced concept with regard music, drama and comedic elements within the film itself.

In the early 1930s, dramatic and musical elements were typically separate within a motion picture. When a song was featured, it was normally performed within the context of the scene and did not communicate at the level of dialogue. *Allá en el Rancho Grande* was unique in this regard since the climactic scene in the film was actually a musical exchange in the form of a song duel between the main character José Francisco (Tito Guízar) and his friend Martín (played by actor, musician and composer Lorenzo Barcelata).[102] This particular way of using music to unfold the story will be discussed later in this chapter as it contributed to the uniqueness of *Allá en el Rancho Grande* in defining the genre.

The blend of regional folk, popular and orchestral sounds in the *comedia ranchera* illustrated a refashioning of traditional musical elements for the purpose of media production and orchestration was consistent with Hollywood scores of the period. By the late 1930s, the musical scores of *comedia ranchera* featured a large orchestral sound with a full array of string, wind and percussion instruments. At various points

[101] This film contains performances of two standards in the modern mariachi repertory by the writing team of Esperón and Cortázar: *¡Esos altos de Jalisco!* and *Cocula*. However, this film is categorized as a "drama" in *Enciclopedia Cinematográfica Mexicana (1897-1955*) s.v. "332. – *El peñón de las ánimas*, pg. 217.

[102] The "song duel" is a common form of musical competition found in various parts of Latin America. It involves two vocalists generally with guitars, singing the same melody on a given subject. The lyrics are improvised by the contestants as the musically respond to each other. The lyrics are typically designed to discredit or "put-down" what the other contestant just sang.

within the film (for example, when the lead character sang the climactic production number), the mariachi was overlaid with thick string and heavy brass sounds. This technique overshadowed the distinctive sound of the mariachi and severely limited its sonic contribution. The overlay technique was not confined to mariachi as hacienda-themed films set in other parts of Mexico used regional folk ensembles in climactic production scenes as well.[103] In addition, the visual image and sounds did not correspond to what appeared on-screen. As a result, the mariachi was reduced to an evocation of the rural musical past that appeared on screen which was directly contrasted by the sonic signature of the Hollywood musical that filled the audio space.

The ingredients for the *comedia ranchera* were nurtured by nationalism, political ideology and identity construction in the postrevolutionary period. Although the director of *Allá en el Rancho Grande*, Fernando de Fuentes is often credited with creating the *comedia ranchera*, the beginnings of the genre go back to the nineteenth century. Stories and novels of ranch culture and the *charro* were in circulation through books and magazines in both Mexico and the U.S. beginning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and literary works were adapted to the screen. Depictions, however, were not confined only to literature as the theater also produced works based on folkloric elements either through drama or in some combination with music and dance which were reproduced and reinterpreted for the stage. In addition, the *teatros de revista* (musical theater) of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries utilized regional folk music

[103] Films such as *Huapango* (1937), *La Zandunga* (1937) (viewed at La Filmoteca of UNAM) and *María Eugenia* (1942) (viewed at Cineteca Nacional) were set in the Veracruz region and those films utilized *jarocho, son huasteco* and marimba ensembles.

and dance genres in their productions as well. Therefore, the hacienda-setting that featured the *charro* figure had a long history in Mexican cultural production prior to its emergence in film. Many of the songs composed for these films became standards in the modern mariachi repertory and, even though records and radio were significant contributors in this process, film was the most effective and widespread means through which the images and sounds of the *comedia ranchera* genre became bound to notions of *mexicanidad* and projected to a global audience.

The *comedia ranchera* produced some of Mexico's most famous film stars including Tito Guízar, Jorge Negrete and Pedro Infante. The on-screen personalities and performance practices of these singing *charros* were distributed throughout Mexico, Spain, Latin America and the southwestern U.S. by way of a network of media sounds and images that carried the genre to unforeseen levels of popularity. With its ties to perceived conservative values and nationalist overtones, the *comedia ranchera* became linked to a cultural valorization of Mexico's pre-revolutionary past and an idealized version of ranch life that was popularized through Mexican popular culture.

The "Silent" Era of Mexican Film

Moving picture technology was brought to Mexico by French representatives of the Lumière Brothers on August 6, 1896 (King 1995, 455). An exhibition featuring the Lumière Cinematograph had recently been held in Paris and the visit to Mexico was intended to promote the new invention not only though open-air public exhibitions, but also in private screenings for President Díaz and his family. In addition to

demonstrations, the Lumière representatives C.F. Ben Bonard and Gabriel Veyre filmed Díaz and others to entice the public with this new form of entertainment.[104] Early examples of moving pictures used action-oriented subjects with titles such as *Disgusto de niños* (*Children's Disgust*), *Demolición de una pared* (*Demolition of a Wall*) and *Llegada del tren* (*Arrival of the Train*) to garner interest (de los Reyes 1987, 10). By 1900, producers employed more theatrical elements with the addition of comedic and acrobatic routines (Mora 1982, 7). Numerous salons for the showing of these moving pictures opened in Mexico City between 1901 and 1904. *El Buen Tono*, a cigarette and cigar company built with French capital in the nineteenth century (and one of the early entrants into commercial radio) opened a salon in 1904 on the upper floor of its offices (ibid., 8). The demand for screenings increased and, as a result, French and U.S. producers marketed films to a growing number of exhibitors. This trend would continue until 1911, when Francisco Madero challenged the re-election of Díaz and the country spiraled into civil war.

The most common cinema form during the Revolution was the documentary. Documentaries were made of battles, events and military/political figures in various parts of the country. Three brothers, Carlos, Eduardo and Guillermo Alva produced some important films during that time and these were created primarily for the purpose of informing the public about newsworthy events (de los Reyes 1995, 68-69). Some of the titles included: *Viaje del señor Madero al sur del país* (*Mr. Madero's Trip to the*

[104] These films included Porfirio Díaz on horseback, walking with his cabinet ministers, riding in a carriage from his residence at Chapultepec Castle to the National Palace in the center of the city (de los Reyes 1987, 10-11).

Southern Part of the Country, 1911), *Los sucesos sangrientos de Puebla* (*The Bloody Events at Puebla*, 1911) and *Revolución orozquista* (*Revolution by the Followers of Orozco*, 1912). The making of these war documentaries was difficult and the effort to show both sides of the conflict could be especially hazardous. These types of cinematic works were essentially "newsreels" and made to inform the public, but the realism was not favorable for the government and as censorship was imposed, a conceptual move was made away from event and action-driven filmmaking toward fictional narrative approaches.

Novels and stories about ranch life in nineteenth century Mexico were especially popular and appeared in books and magazines. Such narratives became even more common around 1916 and by1921, the first ranch-themed films *El caporal* (*The Foreman*) and *En la hacienda* (*In the Hacienda*) were produced. The author and director of *El caporal*, Miguel Contreras Torres, was born in Morelia and was the son of a *hacendado* (hacienda owner) (García Riera 1998, 56) His film was an autobiographical account with nationalist overtones meant to valorize the life he remembered on the hacienda (de los Reyes 1987, 90). The second film, *En la hacienda* was a rural drama based on a *zarzuela* by Federico Carlos Kegel of Jalisco. It was a love story set against the backdrop of peasant exploitation and apparently written as a response to the agrarian reforms of the Obregón administration (ibid., 84-85). The story itself was written in 1907 and according to García Riera (1995) was initially titled *En la hacienda o Rancho Grande* (56). This film and *El caporal* are typically cited as the "silent" forerunners of *Allá en el Rancho Grande* (1936) and their idealized pre-revolutionary conceptions of

ranch life were based on earlier examples. Nationalism and conservative values (class structure, Catholicism, patriarchal nature of the hacienda social structure) were underlying political currents in the postrevolutionary period and these two films from 1921 displayed characteristics indicative of that perspective.

Melodrama was a common stylistic element in the "silent" era and *El caporal* and *En la hacienda* may be the oldest examples in that respect (Ayala Blanco 1968, 66). The consequences of life choices were underlying themes in melodramas of the early twentieth century and applied to this was the notion of "forbidden love" or the "fallen woman." The social and moral aspects of melodrama were easily transferred to the *comedia ranchera* genre as the hacienda with its strict social and moral code became the setting for the valorization of pre-revolutionary life and the music of the western region provided an aesthetic and nationalist connection to Mexico's rural past.

Sound Films and the Emergent Mexican Film Industry (1931-1936)

Prior to the emergence of sound film production in Mexico, Hollywood attempted to infiltrate the Spanish-speaking market. Recognizing potential financial gains, some studios made Spanish language films in the early 1930s with actors and script writers from Spain and various parts of Latin America. Notable personalities who participated in this project were Lupita Tovar (star of *Santa*) Tito Guízar, Cuban bandleader Xavier Cugat and the well-known Argentine tango singer Carlos Gardel (King 1995, 463). The peak production for these films was 1930-31 with sixty-three movies made in 1930 and forty-eight in 1931 (King, 1995, 464). These films, however, were not well-received.

One reason was that Hollywood producers cast actors without regard for accent, dialect or physical features, which irritated Spanish-speaking audiences. Within the context of these films, there was a credibility problem when "an Argentine had a Mexican brother and a Catalan sister" (ibid.). While Hollywood producers may not have been able to tell the difference, Spanish-speaking audiences did and these films came to an abrupt end.

In the late 1920s, the Mexican film industry was practically non-existent. Hollywood dominated the industry and out of "244 films exhibited in Mexico City in 1930, only 4 were Mexican" (Ramírez-Berg 1992, 13). A group of entrepreneurs were determined to jumpstart the Mexican film industry and formed *Compania Nacional Productora de Películas* (National Movie Production Company).[105] This group went to Hollywood, bought equipment and hired Mexican actors as well as a director. Upon their return to Mexico they began production on *Santa.*

Sound film production in Mexico started in 1929; however, the first successful film was *Santa* in 1931.[106] This film featured the music of Agustín Lara under the musical direction by Miguel Lerdo de Tejada (García Riera 1992, 51). *Santa*, melodrama based on a 1903 novel by Federico Gamboa, is about a young girl who falls in love with a military officer, is seduced and later abandoned. Her brothers force her out of their home and she ends up living in a brothel as a prostitute. An earlier "silent" version was made

[105] The members of this group were Juan de la Cruz Alarcón, "a wealthy film distributor and ex-revolutionary associate of Madero, the journalist Carlos Noriega Hope, and the veteran cineast Gustavo Sáenz de Sicilia" (Mora 1982, 34-35).

[106] The translation for *Santa* is "female saint." *Santa* is recognized as the "first" sound film, although earlier examples included *Dios y ley* (*God and Law*) and *El águila y el nopal* (*The Eagle and the Cactus Leaf*) both made in 1929. These 1929 attempts were considered dull and apparently did not generate any interest among the public (García Riera 1992, 11)

in 1918 and produced by Germán Camús; other film versions appeared in 1943 and 1968 (ibid., 49-50). *Santa* was a milestone in the development of the Mexican film industry and due to its commercial success, initiated a new era in the production of sound films (de la Vega Alfaro 1995, 79).

Gradually, the Mexican film industry started to produce more films. Six were released in 1932 and two films, *Una vida por otra* ("One life for another") and *Mano a mano* ("Hand to hand"), included songs by Lorenzo Barcelata. Out of these two films, *Mano a mano* was the one that signaled the future *comedia ranchera* genre. Set in the western region and the rural life of the hacienda, *Mano a mano* was one of the first sound films centered on ranch culture. In addition to the geographic setting and the melodramatic nature of the plot, it also included a *charreada*, horse race, card game and cockfight scene.[107] Although it did not have any featured songs, at the end of the film there was an on-screen performance of *Los Trovadores Tamulipecos* singing *Las Mañanitas*.[108]

Mano a mano was only forty-seven minutes in length and had a number of shortcomings as noted by film scholar Emilio García Riera (1992, 69-70). However, while it may have been lacking in cinematic terms, *Mano a mano* signaled what was on the horizon for the Mexican film industry – idealized versions of hacienda life and a valorization of ranch culture. With music and *charro* displays of horsemanship, bullfighting and overall *machismo*, *Mano a mano* was possibly the first sound film to

[107] This observation is based on my research at La Filmoteca (UNAM) and Cineteca Nacional. See the Bibliography for a complete listing of viewed films.
[108] *Las Mañanitas* is a traditional song is typically sung at any life-cycle event.

establish the elements of geographic setting, music, ranch society and culture as potential ingredients for the *comedia ranchera* genre of the late 1930s and early 40s.

Fernando de Fuentes, director

Fernando de Fuentes (1894-1958) was an important figure in the development of the Mexican film industry. Born in Veracruz in 1894, de Fuentes was raised in Monterrey, Mexico, spent his adolescent years in the United States and attended Tulane University in New Orleans as a student of philosophy and letters (González Dueñas 1998, 4). De Fuentes returned to Mexico in his twenties and "for a time, during the Revolution, obtained a post as auxiliary secretary to [President] Venustiano Carranza" (ibid.). He began his career in the movie business as manager of the Olympic Theater - owned by Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta. The future director also had the opportunity to be a second assistant to Antonio Moreno in the filming of *Santa* in 1931. (Carro 1995, 282).

In the early 1930s, he directed three important films on revolutionary subjects: *El prisonero trece* (*Prisoner Number Thirteen*, 1933); *El compadre Mendoza* (*Mendoza, the Godfather*, 1933) and *¡Vámonos con Pancho Villa!* (*Let's Go With Pancho Villa!*, 1935). Referred to as de Fuentes' "trilogy" on the Mexican Revolution, these three films were unusual at the time for their treatment of revolutionary subjects. Out of the three, *El compadre Mendoza* and *¡Vámonos con Pancho Villa!* had the greatest impact on filmmaking. *El compadre Mendoza* dealt with the nature of civil war and the ambiguity of choosing sides when a man betrays his friend to save himself from financial ruin (González Dueñas 1998, 11). In *¡Vámonos con Pancho Villa*!, a group of six *rancheros*

join the ranks of Villa's army and subsequently die in his service (ibid., 14-15). This film was unique in its large-scale production that included a large number of extras for the battle scenes and real trains.

In 1935, just before the release of ¡*Vámonos con Pancho Villa!*, de Fuentes made some brief remarks to a film magazine and was quoted as saying:

> "My work is and will be purely nationalist…The artistic result I have achieved has been approved by the public and this is my greatest compensation."
>
> "Mi labor es y será de nacionalismo puro…El resultado artístico que he obtenido ha sido aprobado por el público, y ésta es mi major recompense" (*El Cine Gráfico*, año 3, no. 115).

Federico Dávalos Orozco, noted that the Revolutionary trilogy by Fernando "questions the meaning of war" and examines the conditions of that era that "led many of his characters into corruption, treason and a meaningless death in either a futile pursuit of glory or an effort to satisfy the ambitions of a general" (1999, 25). De Fuentes placed characters within the context of the Revolution in an effort to demonstrate the ambiguities of war and its effects on lives extended far from the battlefield.

Fernando de Fuentes was an important director and producer in the formation of the *comedia ranchera* genre however the ideas behind the storylines were formulated long before the emergence of *Allá en el Rancho Grande*. De Fuentes synthesized comedic and musical performances within a melodramatic plot to create a genre that was popular with audiences in the 1930s and 40s. The political and cultural effects of the Revolution continued into the 1940s and while the *comedia ranchera* genre reached its peak in terms of popularity during this period, the die was cast in the 1930s and the film genre did not exhibit any significant structural changes in the early1940s.

Allá en el Rancho Grande: Model of a Genre

The film identified with initiating the *comedia ranchera* genre was *Allá en el Rancho Grande* in 1936. Written by Antonio Guzmán Aguilera (aka "Guz Águila") and his sister Luz Guzmán and directed by Fernando de Fuentes, this motion picture is recognized as one of the most important works in the history of Mexican film. After only two months in production, *Allá en el Rancho Grande* premiered on October 6, 1936 at the *Cine Alameda* where it ran for twelve days (García Riera 1992, 234). The film was generally well-received by critics and won top prize for cinematography at the Venice Film Festival in 1936 (de los Reyes 1987, 152). *Allá en el Rancho Grande* has been credited with starting the "golden age" of Mexican cinema and the genre which was the cinematic vehicle for future *charro* icons Jorge Negrete and Pedro Infante in the 1940s and 50s.

Allá en el Rancho Grande is the story of a love triangle between José Francisco (Tito Guízar) the *caporal* or foreman, Cruz (Esther Fernández), a peasant girl and Felipe (René Cardona), the *hacendado*. José Francisco is Felipe's *caporal* and they have been friends since childhood. While José Francisco is away, Cruz's godmother Angela approaches Felipe with a proposal to marry Cruz. Not knowing Cruz's true feelings for José Francisco, Felipe agrees. When José Francisco returns and finds out about the arrangement, he confronts Felipe and intends to shoot him; however, José Francisco learns that nothing happened between Cruz and Felipe and, in the end Cruz weds José Francisco.

Guz Águila, the co-writer of *Allá en el Rancho Grande* had considerable experience in Mexican musical theater in the 1920s. A review of one of his works indicated that he had written a *zarzuela* with "small doses of politics." (Birotteau 1921, 22). Regarding the screenplay of *Allá en el Rancho Grande*, film historian Aurelio de los Reyes wrote:

> Antonio Guzmán Aguilera, the script writer whose theatrical works mocked politics, politicians and generals right in their noses in 1920, lessened the satire and criticism and converted himself into a eulogizer of an idealized past that he doesn't want to destroy: in defense of tradition and the landowners system.
>
> Antonio Guzmán Aguilera, El argumentista que se burlaba en sus obras de teatro de la política, de los politicos y de los generales en sus propias narices en 1920, atenuó la sátira y la critica y se convertió en panegirista de un pasado idealizado al que no se debe destruir: en defensor de la tradición y del orden establecidos. (1987, 147-148).

de los Reyes went on to say:

> The criticism of the government implicit in the screenplay of *Allá en el Rancho Grande* was made from a conservative and traditional point of view. It was a criticism that was skillfully enveloped in the style of the customs and the songs.
>
> La crítica al gobierno implícita en el argumento de Allá en el Rancho Grande se hacía desde el punto de vista conservador y tradicional. Era una crítica hábilmente envuelta en el ropaje de las costumbres y de las canciones (ibid., 148).

These political overtones aside, de los Reyes has pointed out that the characters and plot of *Allá en el Rancho Grande* bear a striking resemblance to *Astucia* (*Cunning*), a work by the nineteenth century Mexican writer Luis Inclán (149-150). Although de los Reyes stopped short of accusing Guzmán Aguilera of plagiarism, similarities between these works were identified with regard to plot and characters. If he did "borrow" from Inclán,

as de los Reyes implied, Guzmán Aguilera's revalorization was not unusual as nineteenth century Mexican novels were being retold through film (ibid., 152).

Antonio Guzman Aguilera wrote a number of screenplays between 1933 and 1942 and many successful *comedia ranchera* and non-*ranchera* style films. These included: *La mujer del puerto* (*The Woman of the Port*, 1933) - a melodrama that starred Andrea Palma; *Bajo el cielo de Mexico* (*Under the Mexican Sky*, 1937) - similar to *Allá en el Rancho Grande* with Fernando de Fuentes as director; *Amapola del camino* (*Poppy of the Road*, 1937) - again, a similar *comedia ranchera* vehicle for Tito Guízar; *Perjura* (*Perjurer*, 1938) - with Jorge Negrete; *Allá en el Trópico* (*Over in the Tropics*, 1940) – different setting, but similar structure to *Rancho Grande* with Tito Guízar, directed by Fernando de Fuentes; *¡Así se quiere en Jalisco!* (*That is How We Love in Jalisco!*, 1942) – a classic example of *comedia ranchera*, directed by Fernando de Fuentes and starring Jorge Negrete.[109]

Antonio Guzmán Aguilera had a significant impact not only on the development of Mexican film and on the formation of the *comedia ranchera* genre, but also on mariachi itself. His theatrical approach made music a key element in the genre and as the *comedia ranchera* became increasing popular, more films were produced. This created a demand for more music and led to a marked increase in the repertory. In addition, the productions grew more elaborate with large fiesta scenes that included musicians along with dancers. As these scenes became exhibitions of grand proportions, the music

[109]Sources that contain information on a variety of Mexican film genres include: Aviña (2004); Ayala Blanco (1968); de los Reyes (1987); García Riera (1998, 1992); Hershfeld and Maciel, eds. (1999); Mora (1982); Paranaguá, ed. (1995).

followed suit becoming thicker with dense brass and string sounds. The singing *charro* became the focal point, his on-screen vocal performances grew longer and the productions became more elaborate.

Charreada and *Comedia Ranchera*

Another important influence in the development of the *comedia ranchera* was the integration of the *charreada* within the storyline of the film. As mentioned in Chapter One, the *charreada* was an important part of ranch culture and reached the level of national sport in 1921. The competition between *charros* tested equestrian and ranch skills including cattle-roping and bull-riding. These ranch skills, historically linked to the Spanish colonial period, were also significant characteristics used in the literary construction of the *charro* as a macho figure. In nineteenth century, novels and stories about the idyllic life of the *charro* and the *charrrerada* emphasized a cultural activity that was identified with the western region and the area of *Los Altos* in northeast Jalisco. Although many of the *comedia ranchera* films were not actually filmed in *Los Altos* (*Allá en el Rancho Grande* was shot near *Tlalnepantla*, an area north of Mexico City), the region of *Los Altos* was evoked through song, dialogue and topography.

The *charreada* and bullfighting were structural elements in the plots of a number of films. In some, such as *¡Ora Ponciano!* (*Now Ponciano!*, 1936) and *Maravilla del toreo* (*Marvels of Bullfighting*, 1942), the story was centered on the lead character who wanted to become a bullfighter. In others, like *¡Así es mi tierra!* (*Thus is My Country*, 1937) that starred the well-known comedian *Cantinflas* (Mario Moreno), the bullfight

was used as a vehicle for comedic action. In both instances however, the mariachi appeared on-screen in these types of scenes and were heard on the soundtrack. The on-screen appearance by the mariachi indicated not only the festive nature of the event, but also their importance in depictions of rural cultural life.

The rural setting of the *comedia ranchera* was a requirement in the films of the late 1930s; however by 1942, as demonstrated in *Cuando viajan las estrellas* (*When Stars Travel*), a film which starred Jorge Negrete, an urban side of the *charro* was introduced. In this particular film, Negrete was not dressed in the *traje de charro* throughout, yet his character was linked to the hacienda setting as a landowner and musical production scenes appeared as expected. Nevertheless, by moving the *charro* outside of his normal rural setting, new situations could be exploited for their comedic value.

The *Charro* and the Singing Cowboy Film Genres

The concept of "The West" held a certain fascination for U.S. audiences in the early twentieth century and the sale of "dime novels" with romantic stories of cowboys and rural life abounded (Stanfield 2002, 9-12). Hollywood started the "western" film genre during the silent era and by the late 1920s it was a significant part of the industry's output (ibid., 77). The most famous of the singing cowboys was Gene Autry (1907-1998), a Texan who worked as a telegraph operator before going to New York in 1927. Like most performers at that time, Autry got his start by making records and appearing on radio. His entrance into the singing cowboy film genre came in 1935 with a starring role in *Tumbling Tumbleweeds* (Malone 2002, 143).

The singing cowboy genre appeared at virtually the same time as the *charro* films and therefore a possible connection either in terms of film production or in broader idealized notions of rural ranch life is indicated. Similarities have been noted, especially with regard to these figures as lead characters in a kind of "western musical" form:

> The image of the singing *charro*, the emblem of Mexican virility, was at one level clearly a reworking of Roy Rogers and Gene Autry films, but it added a particular Mexican pastoral fantasy to the model and also drew on Mexican popular cultural forms – the *canción ranchera* from Guadalajara and the Bajío (King 1995, 467)

Film scholar Rafael Aviña also referred to this "reworking" of the singing cowboy in relation to the *comedia ranchera*:

> In turn, the genre demonstrates a certain film-like influence from the old U.S. western musicals, like those of Gene Autry or Roy Rogers, without leaving aside the theater of burlesque review and the nationally picturesque province.
>
> A su vez, el género muestra cierta influencia filmica de los viejos westerns musicales estadunidenses, como los de Gene Autry o Roy Rogers, sin dejar de lado el teatro de revista burlesco y la picaresca nacional de provincia (Aviña 2004, 152).

Even if there were no direct links between the two, it would seem that by way of the media production of culture, both genres followed a similar marketing "script." In *Horse Opera* (2002), author Peter Stanfield cited comments by cinema managers in a 1939 report that noted their opinions regarding cowboy movies: horsemanship, songs, comedy, action and "a sensible story" were offered as the ingredients for a successful singing cowboy film (93).

A number of movie titles from *comedia ranchera* and singing cowboy films used the same title as the featured song. As a cinema manager pointed out: "The surest way to put over a western picture is to tie it in with a popular song" (ibid.). Radio was a big

part of film promotion and if the title of the featured song was also the title of the film, then radio stations were performing a double service:

> Hollywood made sure to use the names of its films as part of the titles of its theme songs, so radio – like it or not – would automatically plug its pix when announcing the song titles and recordings played (Hilmes 1990, quoted in Stanfield, 85).

The process of choosing a film title however did not always occur in the way that Hilmes suggested. In an interview given by Tito Guízar a few months before his death on December 24, 1999, he recounted his meeting with director Fernando de Fuentes:

> *How did the opportunity to be in Mexican film come about?*
>
> In 1936 I came home to Mexico to visit my parents. During one of my trips to the city I went to El Tupinamba, a famous café. At that time I was approached by a gentleman who said to me: 'Tito, I heard you sing in New York and I liked your interpretation. You know? I would like you to be in a film. My name is Fernando de Fuentes, I am a director and I have a script that I am sure you will be interested in: it's called *Cruz*. Come to my house tonight so you can read it. I believe you could play the role of the lover.'
>
> *What happened that night?*
>
> We read the script and I sang. My only problem was the title: I suggested changing it to *Allá en el Rancho Grande*. It was a song that I presented night after night on CBS broadcasts. I learned it from my mother. This is the way I sang it: Allá en el Rancho Grande/ allá donde viviiiiiiiiía/ Había una rancherita, que alegre me decía, que alegre me deciiiía…
>
> Verse translation: "Over at the big ranch/over where I used to live/There was this cute little ranch girl who would gleefully tell me, who would gleefully tell me…"
>
> *¿Cómo se presenta la oportunidad de incursionar en el cine mexicano?*
>
> En 1936 vine al país para visitar a mis padres. Durante uno de mis recorridos por la ciudad entré a El Tupinamba, un café famoso. Ahí se me acercó un caballero para decirme: 'Tito, lo escuché cantar en Nueva York y me gusto su interpretación. ¿Sabe? Usted podría ser actor de cine. Mi nombre es Fernando

> de Fuentes, soy director y tengo un argumento en el que seguro le interesará trabajar: se llama *Cruz*. Venga a mi casa esta noche para que lo lea. Creo que el papel del galán le queda.
>
> *¿Qué pasó esa noche?*
>
> Leímos el argumento y me encantó. Lo único que refute a Fernando fue el título; le sugerí cambiárselo por el de *Allá en el Rancho Grande*. Pertenecía a la canción con que me presentaba noche a noche en las audiciones de la CBS. Me la había enseñado mi madre. Ahí mismo le canté: Allá en el Rancho Grande/allá donde viviiiiiiiiía/Había una rancherita, que alegre me decía, que alegre me deciiiiía… (Camarena y Salzar 2000, 69).

Allá en el Rancho Grande was not the only film from the *comedia ranchera* genre to have the same title as the featured *canción ranchera*. A brief list up until 1942 included: *Cielito lindo* (1936), *¡Ay, Jalisco… no te rajes!* (1941), *¡Así se quiere en Jalisco!* (1942) and *Jesusita en Chihuahua* (1942). However these titles came about, there appears to have been a practice of using the same title for the film and the featured song in both Mexican ranch film and in the U.S. produced singing cowboy genre. The result indicated the highly interactive and relational nature of the media forms in the 1930s and 40s with regard to advertising and promotion.

Music and *Comedia Ranchera*

Music was the single-most important element in the *comedia ranchera* and set it apart from other forms. Songs and large-scale production scenes were designed to feature the singing *charro*, the main characters and the musicians. Trios were common in the genre and these groups performed in *serenata* scenes as well as with the mariachi. In general, their suave interpretations lent a sophisticated, urban character to offset the rural sound of the mariachi. In the *serenata* they accompanied the *charro* as he sang to his

love from outside her window. The trio's rich vocal and instrumental harmonies, along with their smooth delivery, not only contrasted to the sounds of mariachi, but also symbolized a modern, contemporary aesthetic within the context of the *comedia ranchera*.[110]

Trios actually appeared in films more often than mariachis from the early to mid 1930s.[111] Groups such as *Trio Murciélagos, Trio Tariácuri* and *Trio Calaveras* were the main groups that performed in films from this period. These groups were especially popular at the time because of the *bolero*, a musical form that was popular throughout Latin America at the time.[112] The trio was used in the *comedia ranchera* genre to inflect romantic ambience or an added flair of urban sophistication.

The variety of musical genres that appeared in the *comedia ranchera* crossed folk and popular music boundaries. Trios and their repertory of romantic works were quite popular in the early 30s and they were heard on numerous recordings and on radio shows. The traditional *son jalisciense*, the music and dance genre from the state of Jalisco, was used sparingly and was heard most often in folkloric scenes such as a fiesta or *charreada.* The 1937 film *¡Así es mi tierra!* ushered in a new era in mariachi performance with the first on-screen performance of Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán on film and initiated a significant moment in the transformation of mariachi through media performance.

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[110] According to Rubén Fuentes, there were two kinds of trios: *trios románticos* and *trios rancheros.* The *trios románticos* were groups like *Los Panchos* and *Los Dandys.* The *trios rancheros* (*Trio Calaveras*, *Trio Tariácuri*) were the ones that appeared in the films (personal interview, January 18, 2006).
[111] *Trio Murciélagos* and *Trio Tariácuri* perform *Jarabe Tapatío* prior to the cockfight scene in the film.
[112] The *bolero* is a lyrical love song with origins in Cuba in the 18th/19th centuries and made its way to Mexico via the Veracruz region. The rhythm of the bolero is smooth and not syncopated. Harmonies are rich with extended chords and melodies are sung in an expressive manner

Tito Guízar: The First Singing *Charro*

Tito Guízar became a media superstar as a result of his performance in *Allá en el Rancho Grande* in 1936. Prior to this role, Guízar worked in New York City in radio, recordings and live performance (Argente 2000, 57-61). He also caught the attention of Hollywood and appeared in three Spanish-language productions released in 1935: *See, See Señorita*, *Milagroso Hollywood* and *Under the Pampas Moon*. After the success of *Rancho Grande*, Guízar appeared in more Hollywood productions such as *The Big Broadcast of 1938* (1938), *St. Louis Blues* (1938), The *Llano Kid* (1939) and *Blondie Goes Latin* (1941) to name a few (Terán 2000, 78-87). He had a long career as a recording artist and also returned to radio with U.S. appearances throughout the 1940s and 50s.

Tito Guízar (whose real name was Federico Arturo Guízar Tolentino) was born in Guadalajara on April 8, 1908. He started singing at a young age and in 1925, at the age of seventeen, gave a performance at the *Teatro Degollado* in Guadalajara for a benefit function arranged by his uncle, the governor of the state of Jalisco (Argente 2000, 57). He studied voice with José Pierson in Mexico City and had intended to become an opera singer. Pierson was the most well-known voice teacher in Mexico City at the time and would also instruct Guízar's successor in the *comedia ranchera* genre, Jorge Negrete (Serna 1993, 28).

In 1929, on the advice of Emilio Azcárraga Viduaretta, distributor in Mexico for RCA, Tito went to New York to record songs by Agustín Lara for Victor records. While

in New York, he began studying with Tito Schipa of the Metropolitan Opera, and even though Guízar's heart was in opera, Schipa advised him to remain in popular music:

> ...it was he who gave me the wise advice to sing *rancheras*, he spoke with frankness and told me that classical music is very beautiful, but you have to eat while dedicating yourself to her, this is why he recommended I seize something more popular that was outside my idiosyncrasy and had identification with my people. In this way, with sadness in my heart I left the topcoat and put on the suit of the *charro*.
>
> …él quien me dio el sabio consejo de cantar canciones rancheras, me habló con franqueza y me dijo que la música clásica es muy bella, pero que en pocas ocasiones daba de comer a quien se dedicaba a ella, por eso me recomendó agarrar algo más popular que fuera con mi idiosincrasia y tuviera identificación con mi gente, así con todo el dolor de mi corazón dejé el frac y me puse en traje de charro… (Gallardo, *Esto*, December 27, 1995).

By all accounts, Tito Guízar did not set out to be a singing *charro* and the opportunity to play the part of José Francisco seems to have been solely in the hands of the director, Fernando de Fuentes. Guízar no doubt had the necessary singing and acting experience to learn his role quickly - *Allá en el Rancho Grande* was in production for only two months. Some thought may have been given to using Jorge Negrete in the starring role, but in the end, it was determined that he lacked experience (Buraya 2003, 29).

After making *Allá en el Rancho Grande*, Tito Guízar traveled with Fernando de Fuentes (who also co-produced the film) on a promotional trip to Argentina. The film was well-received there and throughout Latin America. In fact, Guízar himself came to be recognized as an artist who represented Latin America to the world. On April 20, 1937, Guízar performed at Carnegie Hall in New York City and was billed as "The Singing Idol of All the Americas" (Argente 2000, 61). This was apparently also the first time that a Mexican national had headlined Carnegie Hall (ibid.). In the first half he sang

selections from the *Barber of Seville* and in the second, he put on his *traje de charro* and sang songs while accompanying himself on guitar (*El Universal*, November 16, 1995).

Tito Guízar defined the figure and voice of the *charro* in the early films of the *comedia ranchera* genre. With his light skin and physical features he was the embodiment of the *hispanismo* ideal: a figure that symbolized Spanish heritage, yet a "son" of Jalisco. His birthplace of Guadalajara, in the heart of Jalisco, linked him to the region of *Los Altos* – the ethnic and cultural center from a *hispanista* perspective. Tito Guízar's lyrical tenor voice and operatic training displayed a version of *mexicanidad* that fulfilled *hispanista* dreams. As a singing *charro*, Tito Guízar was the model for a film genre that applied music, drama and comedy to the rural context and created a unique form of expression that was projected to a national and international audience. Although Guízar was the model *charro* in the late 1930s, by the 1940s, a different brand of *machismo* emerged – a more romantic, self-assured figure with a deeper singing voice. For this role, producers looked again to a former opera singer with U.S. radio and recording experience – Jorge Negrete.

Jorge Negrete: The Classic *Charro* Figure

Jorge Alberto Negrete Moreno was born on November 30, 1911 in Guanajuato.[113] His father was in the military and after the Revolution he obtained a teaching position at the *Colegio Alemán* ("German Academy") where as a student Jorge displayed a gift for languages and became fluent in German, French, English and Italian (Serna 1993, 21).

[113] In his early radio years at XETR, Negrete used part of his name "Alberto Moreno" so that his parents would not know he was singing on the radio. They believed he was intending to go to medical school. (Serna 1993, 28).

Intending to pursue a military career, he enrolled in the *Colegio Militar* ("Military Academy") in 1925 and there he learned how to ride a horse and handle a gun along with other skills that would serve him well in his acting career (Buraya 2003, 14-15).

Negrete began studying with vocal instructor José Pierson in the late 1920s and by 1931 had left thoughts of military life behind. His singing career began with Radio XETR in Mexico City and within a year auditioned for Emilio Azcárraga, owner of Radio XEW (Serna 1993, 29). Negrete's repertoire at that time consisted of popular songs by composers such as Miguel Lerdo de Tejada and María Grever; however his radio program at XEW was not particularly successful (ibid.). He became friends with other performers at XEW like Chucho Martínez Gil (of the trio, *Los Panchos*) and when Martínez Gil left his radio program for New York, Negrete asked to be his substitute (de Laviada, 1994, 15). Not long after, in November of 1936, Negrete went to New York himself as part of a duet with Ramón Armengod, (another future film star) and by January of 1937 they had their own radio show *The Mexican Caballeros* on NBC (Serna 1993, 36).[114] In addition to radio, Negrete also performed for a time at *Yumurí* a Latin cabaret in Times Square (Flores Muñoz 1999, 8). In 1937, he debuted in his first film, *La madrina del diablo* (*The Godmother of the Devil*) and although its box office receipts were acceptable, it was not the success that Negrete had hoped for (Serna 1993, 36). He continued working in radio and recording in New York and a short time later accepted a role in *La Valentina* (1938). From that point on, film became the focal point of his career.

[114] The show was fifteen minutes long and they were paid sixty dollars a week (Flores Muñoz 1999, 8).

¡Ay Jalisco…no te rajes!

The film that carried the *charro* figure and the *comedia ranchera* genre into the 1940s was *¡Ay Jalisco…no te rajes!* (*Jalisco…Don't Back Down!*, 1941).[115] The *charro* character in this film was a mix of *machismo* and heroism - qualities for a new brand of *charro* identified with Jorge Negrete. Negrete had nine films released in 1938.[116] Of these films, *Juan sin miedo* (*Fearless Juan*) was the closest to the *comedia ranchera* genre.[117]

In *¡Ay Jalisco…no te rajes!* Negrete's character, Salvador Pérez Gómez, has a swagger and bravura not seen in earlier *charro* representations. The plot is centered on Negrete who, at a young age was orphaned and must avenge the deaths of parents - he is invincible and a man to be feared. He is also justified in whatever actions he takes because of his high moral code. This *macho charro* figure became identified with Negrete as the new model for the lead character in the *comedia ranchera* genre.

The performance of the title song is highly produced and has an unusually long introduction with orchestral quotations from the song *Guadalajara* by Pepe Guízar (cousin of Tito). While the music is heard, a series of overlaid images are shown: the Guadalajara cathedral, *charros* on horseback, a pottery market, a *vihuela, guitarrón*,

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[115] In the film, the title appears with three ellipses points and no comma between *Ay* and *Jalisco.* The following sources write the title without the ellipses points and also include a comma (*¡Ay, Jalisco, no te rajes!*): Aviña (2004); de los Reyes (1987); García Riera (1992); Hershfeld (1999); Mora (1982). I have chosen to write the title as it appeared in the film.

[116] In addition to *La madrina del Diablo* and *La Valentina* in 1938 there were: *Caminos de ayer* (*Paths of Yesterday*); *Perjura* (*Perjurer*); *¡Aqui llegó el Valentón!* (*Here Comes the Braggart!*); *Juan sin miedo* (*Fearless Juan*); *Juntos pero no revueltos* (*Together but not Mixed); El cementario de las águilas* (*The Cemetery of the Eagles*); *Un luz en mi camino* (*A Light on my Path*) (Buraya 2003, 149-161).

[117] The star of this motion picture was Juan Silveti who played a bullfighter and actually was one in real life (Buraya 2003, 153).

violin, a fruit market, trumpet player and finally rancheros yelling *gritos* ("cries"). These sounds and images lead to the restaurant scene where the instrumental introduction ends and a female trio (*Trio del Río*) begins a vocal introduction that leads to Negrete's entrance.[118] The mariachi in this scene is expanded and consists of 2 *guitarrónes*, 2 guitars, 2 vihuelas, 2 trumpets, 1 clarinet, and 4 violins and *Trio Tariácuri* performs as well.[119] Sound synchronization was not exact in this performance and is disconnected from the screen images. The orchestral soundtrack leads one to believe that the musicians had greater value as visuals images than as an integral part of the sound.[120]

The success of *Allá en el Rancho Grande* and the popularity of the hacienda/ranch genre generated a number of imitations released in 1937 (García Riera 1992, 253-256). These films took advantage of the popularity of *Rancho Grande* as they all included at least one person linked to the 1936 production.[121] In addition, non-singing *charro* actors such as Pedro Armendáriz and Emilio Fernández emerged in the late 1930s and early 40s. The non-singing *charro* became more common in the 1940s and added to the

[118] The set design for this scene is "modern" and rather sterile. It is striking because these types of scenes were typically shot with rustic design such as in a *cantina* or outside plaza setting.
[119] This ensemble is an expanded version of the standard mariachi. Normally there would be only one *guitarrón.* Also, since the trumpet had just become a regular member of Mariachi Vargas in 1941 (Clark 1992, 6), it unusual that an ensemble with two trumpets would be in this film. Historically, mariachi had an ad hoc quality to it, especially with regard to wind instruments, but it was unexpected to see a clarinet in a 1941 mariachi ensemble.
[120] Rubén Fuentes described the process of playing in films with Negrete by saying that the mariachi was only playing for to keep a festive mood and Negrete was mouthing the words (personal interview, January 18, 2006, Mexico City).
[121] A brief sampling of connections with *Allá en el Rancho Grande* would include: *Las cuatro milpas* (*The Four Cornfields*), actors Lorenzo Barcelata and Carlos López "Chaflán"; *Bajo el cielo de México* (*Under the Mexican Sky*), directed by Fernando de Fuentes and screenplay by Luz Guzmán Aguilera; *Jalisco nunca pierde* (*Jalisco Never Loses*), music by Barcelata; *Amapola delcamino* (*Poppy of the Road*), starred Tito Guízar and the screenplay was written by Guz Aguila (García Riera 1992).

development of figure/character.[122] In general, the plots of *comedia ranchera* and qualities of the *charro* were intensified in the early 1940s and resulted in a more independent and defiant *charro* character.

Changes in the *charro* character between 1936 and 1941were not only the result of the differences between Tito Guízar and Jorge Negrete but also due to storylines designed to emphasize the mythical side of the *charro* with skills beyond those of normal men and a moral code that always had "right" on his side. In addition, the effort to expand on the experience of *charro* beyond the confines of the hacienda allowed the character to develop and to be placed in other situations of conflict and social context. To accommodate storyline expansion, films were also gradually getting longer: *Allá en el Rancho Grande* (1936), 100 minutes (García Riera 1992, 234); *Amapola del camino* (1937), 107 min. (ibid., 275); *¡Ay Jalisco…no te rajes!*, (1941), 120 min. (Buraya 2003, 156-157); *¡Así se quiere en Jalisco!*, (1942), 128 min. (ibid., 159-160). The fact that these films increased in length indicated not only an expansion of the script, but also the more heavily-produced musical scenes which required more musicians and extras to fulfill this type of production.

Both Tito Guízar and Jorge Negrete had an impact on the development of the *charro* figure. Their early careers were strikingly similar in terms of opera, radio and recording experience. Producers and directors not only needed a vocalist with experience to be the singing *charro*, they desired an operatic voice. Tito Guízar and Jorge Negrete

[122] Pedro Armendáriz had supporting roles in: *Las cuatro milpas*, *Jalisco nunca pierde* and *Amapola del camino*. Emilio Fernández had a supporting role in *Las cuatro milpas* and starred in *Adiós Nicanor* (García Riera 1992).

were chosen for similar reasons however while Guízar's voice was appropriate for the 1930's, Negrete's baritone carried the genre into the1940s and with a stronger sense of virility and *machismo.*

The characteristic "tough guy" attitude of Negrete's *charro* figure was not emphasized in Guízar's portrayals.[123] Like Guízar, however, Negrete made the switch to popular music early in his career as well. In addition, they both sang with trios in their films and Negrete may actually have preferred that sound over the mariachi (Fuentes Gassón, personal interview, January 18, 2006, Mexico City). Interestingly, composer Manuel Esperón described an incident during the filming of *¡Ay Jalisco…no te rajes!* when Negrete initially refused to sing the title song, but when reminded of the stipulations in his contract, he relented (*Esto*, July 27, 1995).

Tito Guízar and Jorge Negrete both had light complexions and operatic voices. In that respect, they both "fit" the *hispanista* conceptualization for an icon of Mexican national identity. In the films, Negrete's *charro* was everything Guízar's was - but more. In general, Negrete played characters of individuality and strength that followed their own paths and had high moral values. His rich baritone voice amplified notions of strength and virility along with a European aesthetic. The combination of physical features, voice and character made Negrete the classic version of the singing *charro* that was idolized in popular culture.

[123] That said - there is a scene in *Amapola del camino* (1937) where Guízar and Pedro Armendáriz have an exchange that illustrates Guízar's ability to play the "tough guy." (Excalibur Media Group. DVD. 2004).

The *comedia ranchera* was structurally affirmed as a film genre and form of cultural production with *¡Ay Jalisco…no te rajes!* and was solidified by *¡Así se quiere en Jalisco!* and *El peñón de las ánimas*. These films represented the musical and dramatic climax of the *charro* film genre that began in the 1930s. Although there were differences particularly in regard to the *charro* figure as portrayed by Pedro Infante in1940s and into the 50s, the structural components of the genre (romance, comedy, drama, music) were in place by 1942. The changes that came later were based on the strengths/contributions of individual performers and not the structure of the genre.

Conclusion

The screen image of the *charro* began in Mexican film with the "silent" era as hacienda/ranch themed films developed. In the early 1930s, the *charro* was given a voice and by 1936 he was singing with a bravura and expression that made him a cultural icon for Spanish-speaking audiences. These performers, however, did not achieve this type of widespread popularity on their own. It was a result of directors, producers and the media industry's processes of cultural production that carried the sounds and images of the *charro* and his mariachi to Spanish-speaking markets.

Tito Guízar and Jorge Negrete were singers first and actors second. The role of José Francisco in *Allá en el Rancho Grande* probably could have been done by any number of actors and the same could be said for Jorge Negrete as well. But, it was the voice along with the combination of music, drama and comedy that made the *comedia ranchera* so unique and popular with audiences. The operatic expressive quality in the

voice resonated with aesthetic ideas related to Spanish influences in Mexican culture. This aesthetic relied on lyricism mixed with a *bel canto* singing style that communicated a sense of *bravura* that emerged as a sound symbol of national identity. Lyrical inflections and sentimentality borrowed from popular musical style gave the voice the melodramatic character it needed to become one with the body and image of the *charro*. The figure and voice of the *charro* infused musical performance in the "golden age" with images and sounds marketed to national and international audiences as potent symbols of *mexicanidad*.

Chapter Six: The Modern Mariachi and the Re-creation of Authenticity

"Authentic" Foundations

The modern mariachi as an ensemble and a repertory emerged in the late 1930s and early 1940s as a result of the convergence between media industries and the goals of postrevolutionary nationalism. As the economic and political interests of the record, radio and film industries merged with nationalist ideals, mariachi and the singing *charro* became identified with "the nation" and notions of *mexicanidad.* In the 1930s and early 40s, the media marketed a select version of mariachi to national and international audiences in records, radio and films. Through these processes, the sounds and images of the singing *charro* and mariachi were compressed into packaged forms and distributed for popular consumption.

Mariachi in the early 1940s was "positioned" as an entity that represented "the people" and inextricably linked to its rural musical roots through a performance repertory that reinforced its "origin(s)."[124] Even though the contexts of performance and performance practices shifted the music away from its rural dance roots, by 1942 mariachi was established as a visual and sound symbol of the past that held immense value in the present.[125]

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[124] For discussions on the origin(s) of mariachi see: Chamorro (2000); Jáuregui (1990, 1999); Ochoa Serrano (1992); Rafael (1982); Sheehy (2006); Villacis Sosa. and Francillard Ch. (1995)

[125] I have chosen the year of 1942 for a variety of reasons: first, 1940 is regarded as the "turning point" and at the end of the postrevolutionary period (Joseph, Rubenstein and Zolov (2001, 8). With the onset of World War II in 1941 and the conservative administrations of Camacho (1940-1946) and Alemán (1946-

Beginning in the 1920s, as segments of the population left the countryside and moved to Mexico City, rural culture gained a foothold in the urban context. While population movement remained fluid between rural and urban settings, by the mid 1920s the mariachi ensemble was an established part of social and cultural life in Mexico City.[126] The urban mariachi provided the opportunity for populations that had moved from the western region to maintain a cultural connection with their roots. As mariachis participated in new contexts of public performance such as in restaurants and plazas, rural identity was re-affirmed for themselves as cultural practitioners and for their audiences as participants in the valorization of rural identity.

The urban environment of the 1920s, however, required the mariachi to enter into new forms of cultural production. Radio was the primary means for mass communication and newspapers formed their own stations in Mexico City.[127] Radio CYL, the electronic "arm" of *El Universal* and Radio CYX of *Excelsior*, broadcasted Cirilo Marmolejo and

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1952) nationalist ideals were re-packaged. The cultural position of mariachi however was unaffected. See Fein (2001) and Zolov (2001) for discussions related to cultural production during this period. Second, 1942 was the release year for *¡Así se quiere en Jalisco!* and *El peñón de las ánimas.* These two films along with *¡Ay Jalisco…no te rajes!* in 1941 cemented the *comedia ranchera* as a popular genre and Jorge Negrete's place as *the* singing *charro*. Finally, by 1942 Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán was on its way to becoming the premiere mariachi and instruments of the ensemble were "fixed" by 1941 with the addition of Miguel Martínez on trumpet (Clark 1992)

[126] Cirilo Marmolejo and others from the Cocula region represented this type of movement for mariachi (Flores y Escalante 1994, 13-14). Jesús Jáuregui describes the musical life of Mexico City in 1925 as:

> a flow of singers, musical groups, *orquestas típicas* and native performers, from the majority of the national territory (Sonora, Tamaulipas, Vercruz, Oaxaca, Yucatán…).
>
> …rebosante de cantadores, grupos musicales, orquestas típicas y ejecutantes vernáculos, provientes de la mayor parte del territorio nacional (Sonora, Tamaulipas, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Yucatán…) (1990, 38).

[127] Radio station CYL was established in 1923 by Raúl Azcárraga, owner of *La Casa de la Radio* (The House of Radio) that sold receptors and parts, with *El Universal* owned by Félix Palavicini. Radio CYX was created in conjunction with *Excelsior* in 1924 (Mejía Barquera 1989, 39).

Mariachi Coculense within two years of beginning operations.[128] Radio contributed to the circulation of mariachi and provided the opportunity to reach a broad audience. Mariachi, however, was not completely unknown in Mexico City, even before the 1920s as groups were brought to perform for elite politicians and friends of President Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911).[129]

The act of bringing rural musicians to perform for elites and politicians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries valorized rural culture as a kind of "wellspring" for romantic notions of creativity.[130] As writers and intellectuals faced the contradictions of modern urban life, the countryside always seemed to represent "simplicity" and "originality." The music of the western region had been used as source material since the late nineteenth century by piano composers in the creation of new works for concert performance.[131] Literary works in the late nineteenth also drew from rural sources and continued into the twentieth century with Revolutionary themes.[132] During the Revolution, the western region was not as severely impacted by heavy fighting as in the northern and southern parts of Mexico.[133] And, when the violence was over, symbols

[128] The date listed for Radio CYX (*Excelsior*) is August 4, 1925 and for Radio CYL (*El Universal*) the date is August 9, 1925 (Jáuregui 1990, 41).
[129] A 1905 performance by Mariachi Justo Villa for Díaz is described in Méndez Moreno (1961). A 1907 performance by *Cuarteto Coculense* for U.S. Secretary of State Elihu Root is described by Baqueiro Foster in *El Nacional*, num. 948, suplemento dominical ,30 de mayo 1965 [Sunday supplement, May 30, 1965] (quoted in Rafael 1982, 119)
[130] This type of conceptualization with regard to rural musical practices was still evident in works by Campos (1929) and Galindo (1923, 1933).
[131] For a general discussion of works by nineteenth and early twentieth century Mexican art music composers see Béhague (1979) and Stevenson (1952).
[132] See Delpar (2000, 563-566).
[133] Government troops were occupied primarily with Pancho Villa to the north and Emiliano Zapata in the south (Aguilar Camín and Meyer 2001, 36-70). This is not to say that life was unaffected in the western region, but it was not an area for major battles. An account of the revolutionary years in a village in the state of Michoacán is given in González 1974, 115-145.

were needed to promote national unity, it was mariachi - the music of the *ranchero* from the western region emerged as a sound symbol of the "the people" and became the "national" music of Mexico.[134]

The notion of authenticity in mariachi is conceptually linked to both its rural and urban pasts. The rural past is located in the regional *son* and the music and dance repertory that comprised the transregional mariachi.[135] Performance contexts of a religious and social nature were a part of the lived experiences of *rancheros* and villagers in the western region. The integration of music and dance within the cultural practices of the region gave the music its meaning and allowed for a diversity of musical instruments and performance genres.[136] On the other hand, the urban authentic is located in the musical repertory of composer/arrangers Manuel Esperón and Rubén Fuentes who took rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic characteristics from rural genres and inserted them into new works. These compositions retain a sense of the "original" through the referencing of sounds that are perceived as remnants of the past; however their meaning is changed through current practice.[137]

Performers are also important in the mariachi construction of authenticity and records and films play a crucial role in this discourse. The vocal style of the *ranchera* genre is identified with singers such as Tito Guízar, Jorge Negrete and Lucha Reyes.[138]

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[134] Jáuregui (1990) is the most complete source consulted that reinforces this point.
[135] The notion of mariachi as a "transregional" cultural practice is discussed in Chamorro (2000).
[136] See Chamorro Escalante (1999, 2000) and Jáuregui (1990, 2005) for discussion on the rural mariachi.
[137] I am referring here to original compositions such as *Bienvenidos a Tucson* (1992) by Rubén Fuentes written for the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Tucson International Mariachi Conference.
[138] *Ranchera* songs display an overtly sentimental style of singing. They can be in either a slow or fast tempo, but, due to the style of performance, their emotional nature remains intact (Gradante 1982). Lucha

The type of vocal delivery and quality of voice required for the performance of the *ranchera* was embedded within the repertory and identified with specific songs.[139] Recordings and films are historical "records" of performance practices that effectively define and limit the level of innovation allowed by musical style. In the case of instrumental sounds, Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán tends to be the model for mariachi performance and older recordings are not necessarily the model for current performers.[140]

Older maestros familiar with the celebrated performers of mariachi style also reify their authenticity as "icons of the past," invoking them as models of the tradition or through displays of virtuosity.[141] In any event, records and films represent the most "quoted" sources for the study of mariachi (whether one is interested in historical performance or not) and these products have solidified a particular version of the mariachi sound within the consciousness of listeners and performers and helped construct the notion of the "authentic."

Authenticity in relation to the modern mariachi as an ensemble and a repertory is therefore a combination of both the rural and the urban pasts that are referenced and emulated through new compositions and performance practices. The notion of mariachi as a historically-constructed musical style is based upon innovations of individuals as

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Reyes performance in the film *¡Ay Jalisco…no te rajes!* singing the title song just before the cockfight scene, is a classic example of *ranchera* vocal performance practice (*¡Ay Jalisco…no te rajes!*, 1941. DVD. Quality Films).

[139] "Signature" songs such as *Cocula* (1942) or *¡Esos altos de Jalisco*! (1942) written by Manuel Esperón and Ernesto Cortázar are difficult to separate from the voice of Jorge Negrete.

[140] Current mariachi instrumental performance practice tends to follow recent models and not those from the 1930s or 40s. The aesthetics of contemporary mariachi are vastly different and represent significant changes in approaches to instrumental performance on all instruments, but particularly the trumpets.

[141] I have been both a student and an observer at mariachi performance workshops in Austin (2005); San Antonio (2001, 2002, 2003); San Jose (1997,1998); San Marcos, TX (2005); Stanford, CA (1997) and Tucson (1997, 2003, 2004);

well as the media industries. The operatic vocal styles of Tito Guízar and Jorge Negrete were not forged in the rural context however they were accepted by audiences as "authentic." How is it that a vocal performance practice taken from the concert hall that referenced European music and style became the "standard" for mariachi performance? This question relates to the nature of mariachi authenticity as a notion that became fixed in the 1930s and 40s through participation in the processes of the media's production of culture and the popular music industry. As a result, the repertory and performance practices of mariachi illustrate its hybrid nature as an ensemble with an overwhelmingly large repertory and styles of performance based on an art and popular music aesthetics and continue as a vital element in current practice.

The Mariachi Tradition

Mariachi as a musical tradition is continually reinforced through recordings, marketing, teaching workshops and performances at mariachi conferences in the U.S.[142] The notion of continuity through performance, repertory, and style are the expressed as ingredients for an "authentic" mariachi representation. As with most musical traditions, the older *maestros* are the standard-bearers and respected for their advanced knowledge and experience acquired over a lifetime of dedicated work. Innovations in performance practices or new compositions are allowed only in terms of the relationship to the musical past. Mariachi performance practices have by no means remained static since 1942,

[142] I attended a workshop session given by Natividad (Nati) Cano where he talked about mariachi and the importance of tradition (see Chapter One, page 5).

however innovations must be perceived by *maestros*, performers and listeners as part of a "natural" development and one that enhances the tradition without detracting from it.[143].

One of the primary methods for maintaining tradition has been through a family lineage that connects performers to original "sources."[144] It is not necessary for the entire group to be blood-related however it is helpful for matters of perception if at least one performer is related to a previous member of the ensemble.[145] For example, the notion of tradition, evident in the current conceptualization of Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán centers on four members who were (and continue to be) designated leaders over time: Gaspar Vargas, Silvestre Vargas, Rubén Fuentes and José "Pepe" Martínez. Gaspar Vargas, the founder of Mariachi Vargas in 1897, was born in Tecalitlán, a town south of Guadalajara in the state of Jalisco. Gaspar's son, Silvestre, became a member of the group in 1921. [146] In 1944, Rubén Fuentes was hired by Silvestre Vargas and appointed "Musical Director" in 1950 (Fuentes, Gassón, personal interview, January 18, 2006, Mexico City). The next change of musical director occurred in 1975 with the hiring of José "Pepe" Martínez, although Rubén Fuentes retained the title of "General Director."[147]

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[143] Innovations such as mariachi arrangements of America pop songs performed on record (i.e. *New York, New York*. 1994. "Mariachi Sol de Mexico." EMI label) or in live performance have been controversial within the mariachi community. In February 2005, a mariachi rendition of "My Girl" by the Temptations was heard performed by the Texas State University Mariachi at Travis High School in Austin, Texas.

[144] In the case of Mariachi Vargas, Gaspar Vargas was the "source"

[145] This was the case with José Marmolejo, nephew of Cirilo who left his uncle's group to form his own (Clark 1994).

[146] Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán uses "generations" as a way to frame their development: First Generation: 1897-1930; Second Generation: 1931-1949; Third Generation: 1950-1975; Fourth Generation: 1975-1999; Fifth Generation: 2000 to date (This information is contained in an unpublished document given to me by Rubén Fuentes entitled: *Biografía del Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán.* This document is a short outline of the history of Mariachi Vargas and is probably distributed for publicity purposes when general information is needed for concert promotion.)

[147] Changes in the first four "generations" also coincide with changes in musical director: 1st generation: Gaspar Vargas; 2nd Generation: Silvestre Vargas; 3rd Generation: Rubén Fuentes; 4th Generation: José

With Mariachi Vargas, tradition is at the crux of what they are selling: a mariachi that can trace its continuity back to its founder over one-hundred years ago. Along with this is the slogan *El Mejor Mariachi del Mundo* (*The Greatest Mariachi in the* World) and is put on t-shirts, CDs, promotional materials and in concert introductions.[148] It does not seem to matter that any blood relationship with Gaspar Vargas ended with the death of Silvestre Vargas in 1985 (Chávez Nájar 2005). Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán is an example of how the mariachi tradition has been conceptualized as part of a continuous line of development that reaches back to its founder and a pre-Revolutionary form of the mariachi ensemble.

Composers: Re-creating Authenticity

The main composers for the *charro* films in the 1930s and early 40s were Lorenzo Barcelata (1898-1943) and Manuel Esperón (b. 1911). Barcelata was most well-known for his popular hit *María Elena* in 1934.[149] He also appeared in numerous films as an actor and wrote film scores in addition to featured songs.[150] Manuel Esperón's work began with *La mujer del puerto* in 1933, but his most famous works of this period were

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"Pepe" Martínez. It should be noted that Silvestre Vargas remained a powerful force within Mariachi Vargas even after Rubén Fuentes became director in 1950 (personal interview, January 18, 2006, Mexico City).

[148] See Chapter One, footnote no. 5 for a listing of albums that include this phrase.

[149] This was a title song in a film by the same name (*La Canción Popular en el Cine Mexicano*. 1991. PECD 134. México: UNAM.

[150] Films that contain songs by Barcelata include: *Una vida por otra* (*One Life for Another*, 1932);*Mano a mano* (*Hand to Hand*, 1932); *Enemigos* (*Enemies*, 1933); *Almas encontradas* (*Encounterd Souls*, 1933); *Allá en el Rancho Grande* (*Over at the Big Ranch*, 1933); *María Elena*, 1934; *Cielito lindo* (*Pretty Little Heaven*, 1936);*¡Ora Ponciano!* (*Now Ponciano!*, 1936); *Las cuatro milpas* (*The Four Cornfields*, 1937); *Bajo el cielo de México* (*Under the Mexican Sky*, 1937); *Jalisco nuna pierde* (*Jalisco Never Loses*, 1937)l *Canción del alma* (*Song of the Soul*, 1937); *Allá en el Rancho Chico* (*Over at the Little Ranch*, 1937); *La Adelita*, 1937; *La Zandunga*, 1937 (García Riera 1992).

his compositions for Jorge Negrete, in the films *¡Ay Jalisco…no te rajes!* (1941), *El peñón de las ánimas* (1942) and *¡Así se quiere en Jalisco!* (1942).[151] Together these two composers participated in the construction of authenticity for the singing *charro* within the film genre and provided the songs for use by the film industry.

Barcelata was born in the Veracruz region and composed his first song in 1925 (Álvarez Coral 1993, 33). In 1927, he formed *Los Trovadores Tamaulipecos* (*The Troubadours from Tamaulipas*) along with Ernesto Cortázar, José Agustín Ramírez and Carlos Peña, and the quartet began touring and performing on radio (ibid. 34).[152] Recordings made in New York for the OKeh label in 1928 indicated the level of visibility that *Los Trovadores Tamulipecos* achieved in a very short time and secured Barcelata's participation as a performer and composer in the popular music industry.[153]

Barcelata was a guitarist as well as a singer and he typically performed with the lead character in *serenata* scenes.[154] In the case of *Allá en el Rancho Grande,* Barcelata performed with Guízar in the climatic cantina scene as mentioned in Chapter Five. Barcelata's on-screen performances, especially in the *serenata* scenes, demonstrated his skills as a performer and singer of music in the style of the *trio romántica* (romantic

[151] In addition to *La mujer del puerto* (*The Woman of the Port,* 1933), Esperón wrote the film scores for *¡Ora Ponciano!* (*Now Ponciano!,* 1937) and *Canción del alma* (*Song of the Soul,* 1937) in the period under consideration (1920-1942).
[152] Ernesto Cortázar would become involved with different facets of the film industry as a writer, actor, composer and performer. His most popular works as the lyricist for Manuel Esperón were the *rancheras ¡Ay Jalisco…no te rajes*!, *Cocula, ¡Esos altos de Jalisco!* and *¡Así se quiere en Jalisco!*
[153] *Los Trovadores Tamulipecos* were recorded on June 1, 5th and 6th, 1928 in New York (Laird and Rust 2004, 479-480).
[154] This observation was noted after viewing *Mano a mano* (1932); *Allá en el Rancho Grande* (1936); *Cielito lindo* (1936) and *¡Ora Ponciano!* (1937) at Filmoteca de la UNAM in October 2005.

trio).[155] Through his compositions and performances in Mexican film in the 1930s, Barcelata facilitated the incorporation of the trio within the mariachi repertory - a development that was indicative of mariachi's position within the popular music industry.

The repertory of the trios was not associated with the rural western region and in the films of the 1930s it seems to have been more common to have a trio than a mariachi.[156] Barcelata was a prominent composer in the 1930s and these songs were presented as "authentic" representations within the context of the film. In this way, certain aspects of the trio repertory and styles of performance became a part of mariachi as the two musical styles performed together in a number of films

Manuel Esperón composed music for hundreds of films during his career.[157] In an interview, he provided a brief glimpse into his approach to composition and described himself as a craftsman that did not rely on inspiration: "…I was technical, scientific, more than romantic, eh." ["…yo fui técnico, cientifico, más que romántico, eh."] (*Noticero Latino,* 6 de marzo de 2005). In the *charro* films of Jorge Negrete, Esperón's film scores and songs are characterized by a dense orchestration that was layered over the sound of the mariachi. And, when Negrete sang the featured song, Esperón used a large orchestral sound that was, in effect, a musical climax for the film.[158] The sound can be

[155] For discussions regarding *trios románticos* and the *bolero* see Dueñas 1990; de la Peza Casares (2001).
[156] This observation is based on the viewing of films listed in the bibliography, however there were also number of ranch-themed films from the 1930s that were not available. Mariachi Coculense de Cirilo Marmolejo was the first mariachi to appear in film and appeared briefly in *Santa* (1931). (*Santa.* 1931. DVD. 2005. México: Filmoteca de la UNAM).
[157] Camarena. *Esto*, July 27, 1995
[158] This effect can be heard in the featured *ranchera* scenes especially in *¡Ay, Jalisco…no te rajes*! (DVD. Quality Films) and *¡Así se quiere en Jalisco!* (DVD. 2003. Alter Films).

described as similar in spirit to the Hollywood musicals of the late 1930s and early 40s which featured heavy brass and virtuosic string sounds.

In *El peñón de las ánimas*, Esperón employs a compositional technique that combines elements of the *ranchera* with the characteristics of the *son jalisciense*. In *Cocula*, a *ranchera* about an area that has been valorized as the "birthplace" of mariachi, Negrete sings on horseback surround by his *compañeros*.[159] The rhythmic emphasis shifts in the chorus section from the standard, duple, polka-like pulse to the syncopated *sesquialtera* of the son *jalisciense* and back again.[160] This compositional technique references the *son jalisciense* and creates a kind of hybrid form that reflects the nature of the modern mariachi as a product of both the rural and urban context. This *ranchera*, composed by Esperón (with lyrics by Ernesto Cortázar) appropriated rural musical "traits" in the creation of new mariachi composition in the effort to sound "authentic," even though the music is highly orchestrated. The practice of quoting from rural music sources had been done since the nineteenth century; however, within the context of this film it provided a conceptual frame that linked modern mariachi with the perceived roots of its repertory.

[159] The area of Cocula as the "birthplace" of mariachi has been advanced in Rafael (1982) and (Villasis Sosa and Francillard 1995). The word *compañeros* is used here to express a sense of "brotherly companionship."

[160] The *sesquialtera* (or *hemiola*) rhythm pattern is represented in the 3 against 2 rhythmic stress between the bass instrument (*guitarrón*) which shifts to a 3/4 meter against the harmonic instruments (guitar and vihuela) that strum syncopated patterns within a 6/8 (compound duple) meter. Changes in meter also occur within instrumental parts such as the violin which also can shift from triple to duple meters in successive measures.

The Modern Mariachi (Conclusion)

In the mid 1920s, mariachi entered into the urban social and culture life of Mexico City. As it entered into new performance contexts, mariachi echoed its rural past and became an emblem for the Mexico's western region. Mariachi was absorbed into urban social life and engaged with the record, radio and film industries and their processes of cultural production. As an ensemble and a repertory, mariachi was transformed by media processes and standardized through the circulation and distribution of cultural products in Mexico, Spain, Latin America and the southwestern U.S.

Authenticity in performance has been maintained through links to the past produced by the media industries. In addition, the effort by practitioners to reify the notion of the mariachi tradition as an art and a practice passed from one generation to the next has been significant in the expansion of mariachi into education institutions and concert halls especially in the United States. The process of linking the past with the present, and the personal way in which it is transmitted has solidified the position of mariachi as a valued cultural form and elevated its stature particularly in the U.S.

The modern mariachi as depicted in the films of the late 1930s and early 40s had little resemblance to rural versions in terms of dress, repertory and performance practices. By participating in the media industry's processes of cultural production, along with the desires of urban populations to maintain connections with their rural roots, authenticity was evoked at every opportunity through references to historical contexts, conditions and musical forms of the past.

The *charro*, the region of *Los Altos*, ranch culture and mariachi were central elements in the construction of a postrevolutionary identity that valorized *mestizo* culture and, as a result of these convergences, the singing *charro* and the mariachi emerged as representative forms of Jalisco and the western region. These images and sounds were shaped by political, economic and cultural trajectories that intersected within the image and voice of the singing *charro* and sound of mariachi and compressed into a representation of *mexicanidad*.

Why was the western region saturated with nationalist ideals and positioned as an ethnic model in the construction of postrevolutionary identity? Given the nature of the region and its history of ranch culture, western Mexico was idealized as an area with a rich Spanish culture that was untouched by urban life. In addition, the inhabitants of the region were valorized for their individuality, Catholic faith, and determination, qualities that represented simplicity and purity for the urban populace. Through the projections of records, radio and films, these conceptualizations injected a sense of nostalgia at a time when conservatives were looking for symbols of Mexico's past. The area of *Los Altos* provided a light-skinned, Spanish-influenced version of national identity that emerged primarily through films and became a part of Mexican popular culture.

This dissertation has examined the extent to which U.S. and Mexican media industries transformed mariachi from a rural tradition to national icon and sound symbol of identity. The political, social, economic and cultural conditions in the 1920s represented an era of tremendous change. The political and social chaos produced by the Revolution caused large segments of the population leave their homes in the countryside

for life in the city. As a result, cultural practices were displaced and bombarded with new influences. The mariachi of the city participated in technologies and contexts that were completely foreign to the rural tradition. The relationship of music with electronic media intermingled with historical political and cultural ideologies struck a favorable chord with the mariachi tradition. Conservative elements drew from the folk and ranch culture of the western region. The string tradition from Cocula resonated with the political and urban elites and provided for the appropriation of the mariachi tradition by conservatives.

The films of the late 1930s may have been a conservative response to the policies of the President Cárdenas (1936-1940). If so, then the political turn to the right was fulfilled with the elections of Manuel Ávila Camacho in 1940 and Miguel Alemán in 1946. The political climate was shifting, not only within Mexico but Latin America in general, through the influences and effects of World War II. The storylines of the *comedia ranchera* resonated with a form of conservative ideology that identified with the perception of "The West" as referenced by U.S. cowboy films and the characteristics of *machismo.* The *charro* became a heroic figure and singing persona that was infused with romanticism. The combination of these elements elevated the iconic value of the *charro* within popular culture as well as the mariachi.

Once mariachi moved from the rural to the urban context, the transformation of the tradition was inevitable. The repertory and performance practices developed along different lines of influence that had no connection with the rural context. Composers and arrangers re-energized the repertory with the *canción ranchera* and held on to the *son jalisciense* through new compositions and arrangements. Continuity took the form of an

evocation and the tradition was forever transformed. Yet, in the popular music arena, mariachi thrived as a result of the new works by composers such as José Alfredo Jiménez and performers like Pedro Infante. For the next two decades, the popularity of mariachi did not diminish and in fact, it expanded as the Mexican recording, radio and film industries continued to grow. Although its popularity would eventually curtail in the 1960s and 70s, the tradition was re-energized in the 1980s and 90s and recognized for its unique position and significance as a visual and sound symbol of *mexicanidad.*

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Vita

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